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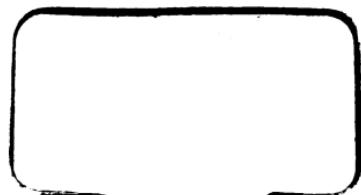
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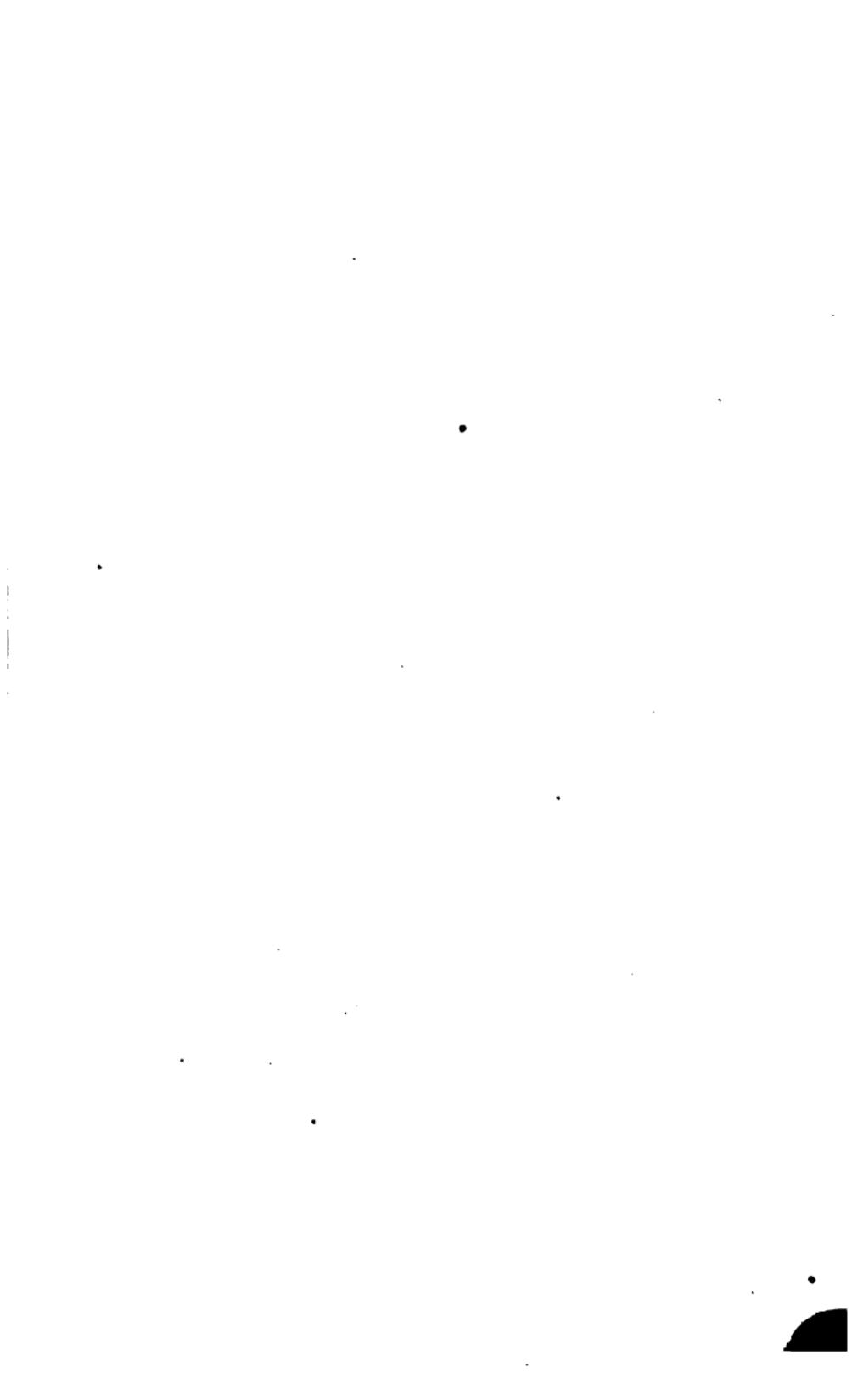
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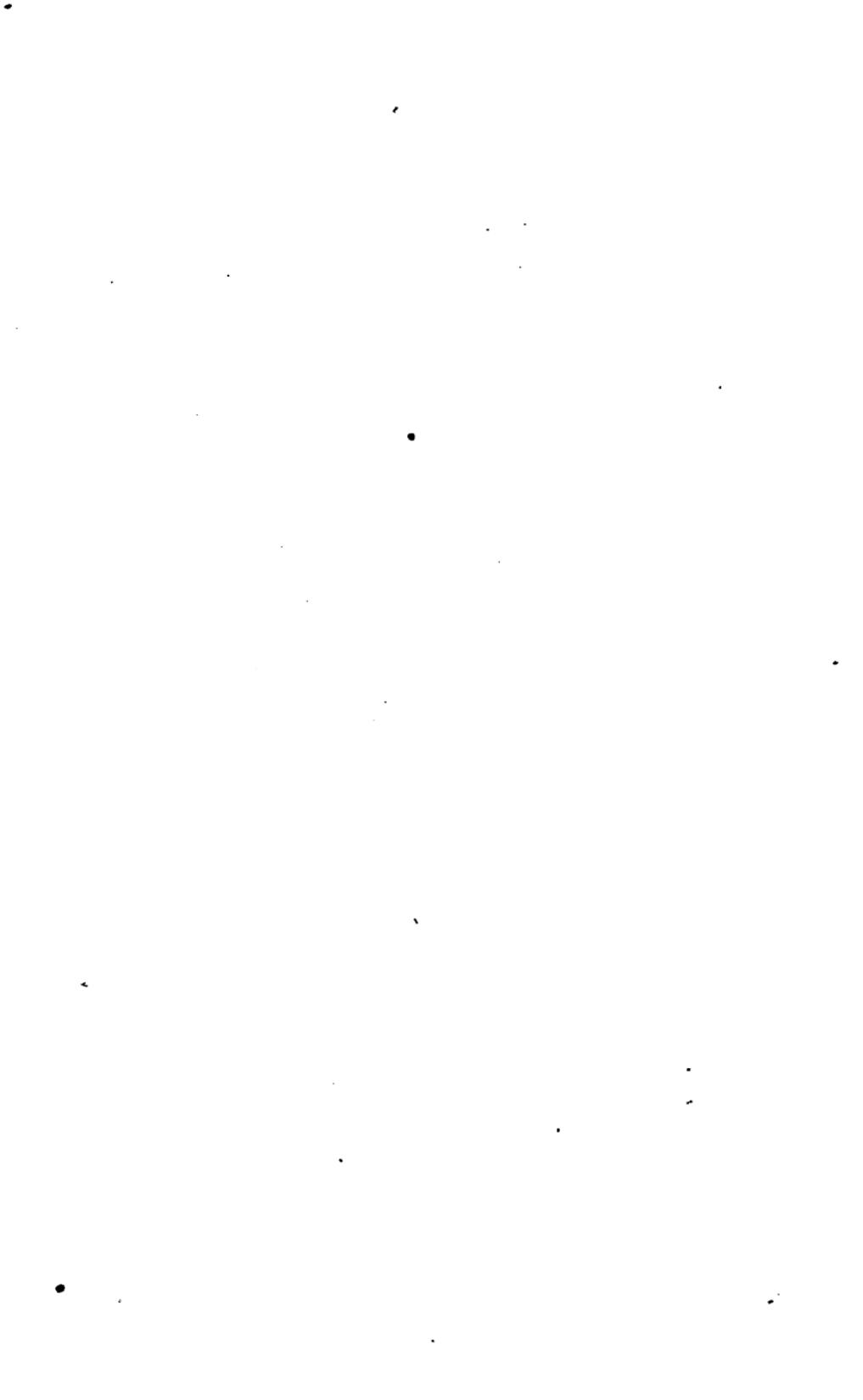
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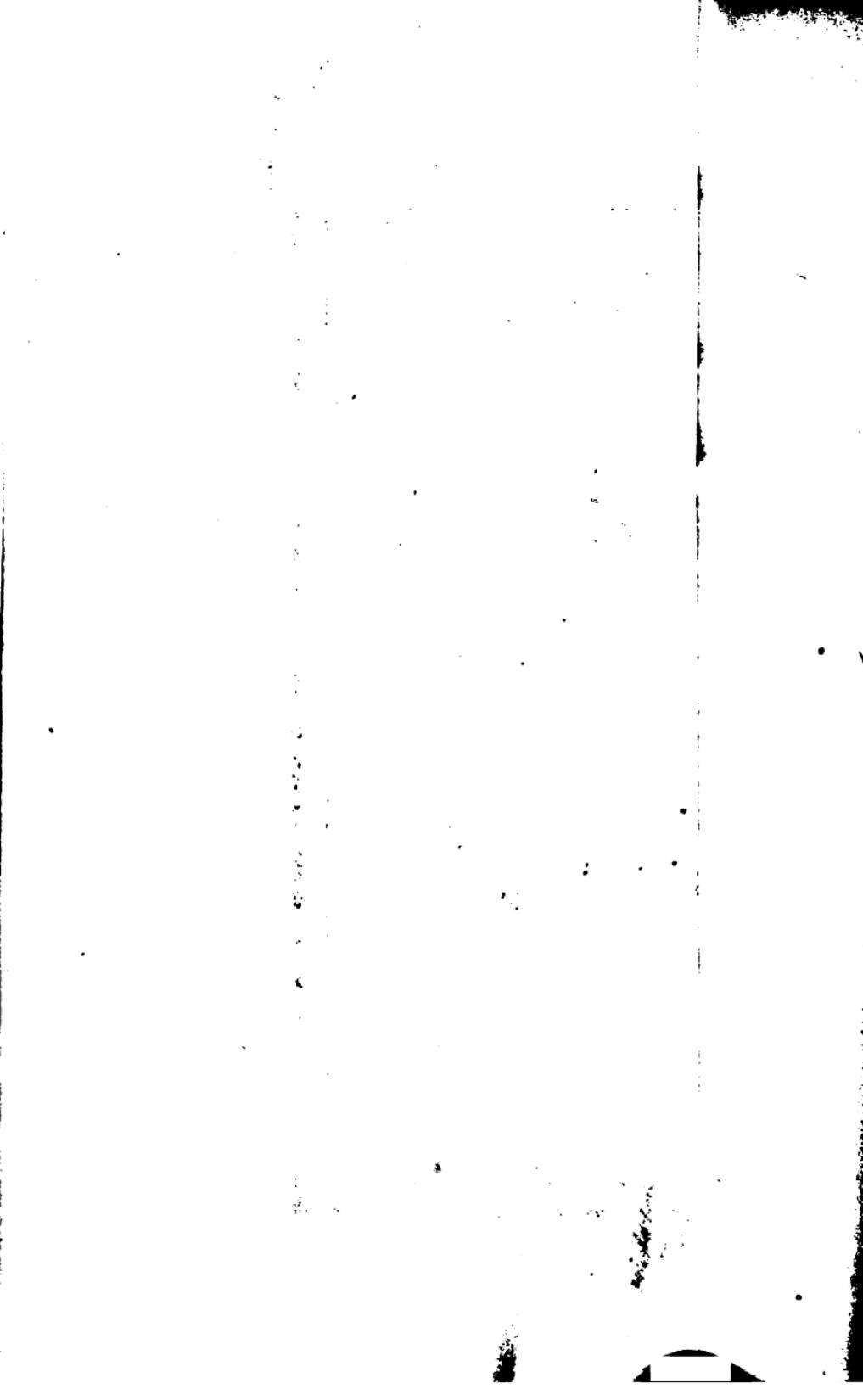


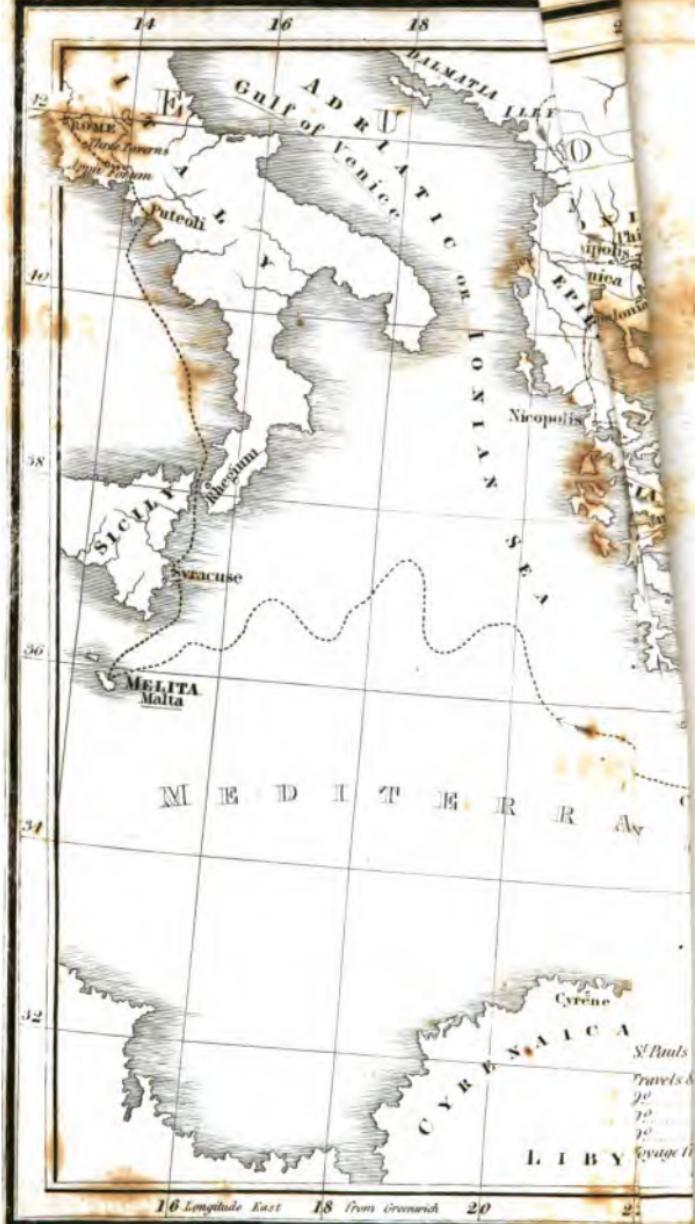












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THE

# A C T S

OF

## THE APOSTLES:

WITH A

## COMMENTARY.

BY

ABIEL ABBOT LIVERMORE.

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## P R E F A C E.

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THE kind approval of friends, and the generous patronage of the public, for which the author feels a lively gratitude, have operated with other and more serious motives, and induced him to add to the Commentary upon the Gospels one upon the Acts of the Apostles. Like the previous volumes, this has been prepared in the midst of many professional duties and cares; which are mentioned, not by way of complaint, — for experience teaches us that the most energetic exercise of our faculties, consistent with health, yields the greatest happiness, — but they are stated, as excuses for imperfections, and foils to a keen-edged criticism.

All the aids that could be procured, in ancient or modern commentators, have been resorted to, and the results embodied in the following pages, rather than the processes and reasonings by which those results were obtained. The work has been composed, less for the learned or professional man, than for the general reader, who, it is hoped, in most instances, will be content to trust the honesty and veracity of the writer, and not care to have the margins crowded with a multiplicity of references to tome, book, chapter, section, and edition, where a remark may be found, or a fact confirmed. The reputation of a learned work might be thus enhanced at little cost, except of paper and print; but it is thought that it would add scarcely any thing to the value of an exposition of this description. A catalogue below will indicate the authorities

and helps which have been investigated, and more or less used, as occasion required.\*

The Map, appended to this volume by the liberality of the Publishers, will also be found, perhaps, in some measure serviceable in studying the geography of the Gospels.

The Calendar of Events is drawn from various sources, and essentially corresponds to the chronology of Lardner.

The Vocabulary of Proper Names is designed to assist in the pronunciation of words which, being derived from the Greek or Latin language, are difficult for an English reader to accentuate correctly. This list is principally derived, though altered, from the excellent Commentary upon the Acts by Professor Ripley.

The author is solely responsible for the captions of the chapters.

It is the present intention of the writer, should life and strength be spared by a gracious Providence, to publish, in process of time, a Commentary upon the remaining books of the New Testament; though the uncertainties of life, and of life in the ministerial profession at the present day, are too numerous not to rebuke any very presuming or assured plans of so great pith and moment.

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\* The Versions and Editions of Luther, Griesbach, Tyndale by Dabney, Beza, Sacy, Wakefield, Thomson, Palfrey, the Catholic Testament, and the Improved Version.

The Commentaries of Poole, Fratres Poloni, Pearce, Hammond, Le Clerc, Lightfoot, Henry, Whitby, Goadby, Rosenmüller, Kuinoel, Doddridge, Stack, Scott, Priestley, Clarke, Kenrick, Dabney, Trollope, Olshausen, Bloomfield, Barnes, and Ripley.

MS. notes of the valuable Lectures of Norton and Palfrey; Calmet's Dictionary; the Pictorial Bible; Robinson's Greek Lexicon of the New Testament; Wilson's Concessions; the Septuagint; Josephus; Eusebius; and the Works of Haynes, Paley, Gerard, Symonds, Jahn, Winer, Prideaux, Hug, Cappe, Lardner, Horne, Watson, Lyttleton, Burder, the Abbotts, Greenwood, Furness, Allen, W. J. Fox, Farmer, Milman, Neander, Robinson's Researches, Spear; General Repository, Scriptural Interpreter, and other periodicals.

With heartfelt remembrances of the aid and approval of the past, from his friends and Christian brethren, and with fervent thankfulness to Heaven for its care and support during the progress of this labor, the author commits his work to the reader. May it not prove wholly unavailing in the cause of Christ; but promote, as is its aim, the high and immortal interests of Christian knowledge, liberty, holiness, charity and piety!

KEENE, N. H., *April 26, 1844.*

1\*

# CALENDAR

OF

SOME OF THE PRINCIPAL EVENTS DURING THE FIRST CENTURY  
OF THE CHRISTIAN ERA, CHIEFLY CONNECTED WITH THE  
ACTS OF THE APOSTLES, AND THEIR EPISTLES.

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## B. C.

- 6.
5. Birth of John the Baptist.  
Birth of Jesus Christ.
2. Death of Herod the Great, and the accession of Archelaus.  
Mat. ii. 19, 22.

## A. D.

7. Archelaus deposed, and Judea reduced to a Roman province.
14. Tiberius succeeds Augustus as Emperor of Rome.
26. Pontius Pilate appointed Procurator of Judea.  
Ministry of John the Baptist.  
Baptism of Jesus.  
Ministry of Jesus Christ.
29. His Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension.  
The Descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Acts ii.  
Cure of the lame man. Chap. iii.  
The Death of Ananias and Sapphira. Chap. v.  
The Apostles imprisoned.
35. The Martyrdom of Stephen. Chap. vii.
36. Pontius Pilate removed.  
Saul converted. Chap. ix.  
His residence of three years in Arabia.
37. Caligula, Roman Emperor.
39. The Christian Churches enjoy rest.
41. The Conversion of Cornelius. Chap. x.  
Claudius Cesar, Roman Emperor.
42. Barnabas and Paul come to Antioch.  
The Disciples first called Christians at Antioch.
44. The Persecution of Herod. Chap. xii.

44. Death of Herod. Famine in Judea.
- 45 - 47. Paul and Barnabas set out from Antioch on the first apostolical journey, chaps. xiii. xiv., and visit Cyprus and Asia Minor.
49. Council at Jerusalem. Chap. xv.
- 50 - 53. Paul's second journey with Silas ; then with Timothy, and with Luke, in which he visits Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Greece. Chaps. xvi. - xviii.
51. The Jews expelled from Rome by Claudius.
52. Paul is supposed to write his Epistles to the Thessalonians, and perhaps that to the Galatians, from Ephesus.
53. Agrippa, King. Felix, Procurator.  
Paul goes to Ephesus ; whence he wrote his First Epistle to the Corinthians.
54. Nero, Emperor of Rome.
55. Paul wrote his First Epistle to Timothy, and that to Titus. He commences his third journey from Ephesus, and visits Macedonia and other places.
57. He wrote his Second Epistle to the Corinthians from Macedonia.
58. He wrote his Epistle to the Romans from Corinth, and journeyed thence to Macedonia, Asia Minor, Syria, and Jerusalem. He is imprisoned, and sent to Cesarea, where he is confined two years. Chaps. xx. - xxiv.
60. Festus, Procurator of Judea. Paul's Defence before Agrippa. He is sent to Rome, but is shipwrecked on the Island of Malta. Chap. xxvii.
61. Paul arrives at Rome, where he remains in confinement two years ; during which time he wrote his Epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon, and Second to Timothy. Chap. xxviii.
63. Paul liberated. He visits Greece.
64. He returns to Rome, writes the Second Epistle to Timothy, and is beheaded by Nero.
- 64 - 67. First Persecution of the Christians at Rome.  
Peter crucified.
64. Gessius Florus, Procurator of Judea.
66. The great Jewish war begun.
70. Jerusalem taken by Titus, and destroyed, with many thousands of its inhabitants.
95. The Second Persecution against the Christians, under Domitian, the Roman Emperor.  
John is supposed to have been banished to the Island of Patmos.
100. The apostle John is believed to have died about this period — the last survivor of the Twelve.

## PRONOUNCING VOCABULARY

OF

**THE MORE DIFFICULT NAMES OF PERSONS AND PLACES OCCURRING IN THE ACTS.**

(Chiefly taken from Ripley's Notes, with alterations.)

The accented, and long and short syllables, are denoted by the usual marks.

A.	B.	C.	D.	E.	G.	L.
A-cel'da-ma		Cá'ia-phas				
A-chá'ia		Ká-ya—				
A-ka'yá		Can'da-ce				
A'dri-a		Cen'chre-a				
Ad-ra-my'ti-um		—kre—				
Ag'a-bus		Ces-a-re'a				
Al-phe'u's		Chal-dé'ans				
Am-phi'p'o-lis		Kal—				
An-a-ni'as		Char'ran				
An-tip'a-tris		Kar—				
Ap-ol-lo'ni-a		Chi'os				
Ap'pi-i-Fó-rum		Ki—				
Aq'ui-lä, or A-quil'ä		Chi'un				
Ak'wë-lä, or A-kuil-ä		Ki—				
Ar-ë-öp'a-gus		Cni'dus				
Ar-e-op'a-gite		Ni—				
—jite		Có'os				
Ar'e-tas		Cór'inth				
A-zo'tus		Crète				
	B.	Krëel				
Be-re'a		Cy-ré'ne				
Ber-ni'ce			D.			
Bi-thy'n'i-a		Dám'ë-ris				
				El'am-ites		
				El'ý-mas		
				É'në-as		
				Eph'e-sus		
				Ep-i-cu-ré'ans		
				E-sá'ias		
				E-za'yas		
				Eu-rocl'y-don		
				Eu'ty-chus		
				—kus		
					G.	
				Gá'ius		
				—yus		
				Ga-mä'li-el		
					L.	
				La-sé'a		
				Lib'er-tines		
				—tins		
				Lýc-a-ó'ni-a		

## PRONOUNCING VOCABULARY.

9

M.	Phi-lip'pi	Sōp'ä-ter
Man'ä-en	Phrÿg'i-a	Sōs'thë-nës
Me'lí-ta	<i>Frij</i> —	Stō'ics
Mi-lé'tus	Pris-cill'a	Sy'chem
Mit-y-lé'ne	Próch'ó-rus	—kem
Mnà'son	<i>Prok</i> —	Sýra-cuse
Nä—	Ptöl-ë-má'is	
My'ra	<i>Tol</i> —	T.
	Pü-té-ö'li, or Pü-té/ö-li	Thë-öph'i-lus
N.		Thes-sa-lö-ní'ca
Ne-ap/o-lis	R.	Theu'däs
Ni-cä/nor	Rhë'gi-um	Ti-mö/thé-us
Ni/ger	—ji—	Thy-a-tí'ra
—jer	Rhôdes	Tro'äs
O.		Tro-gÿ/lí-um
Öl'i-vët	Sad'dú-cëës	—jil—
	Sal-mô/ne	Tröph'i-müs
P.	Sam-o-thrä/ci-a	Tých'i-cus
Pat'ä-ra	Sap-phi'ra	<i>Tyk</i> —
Phä/raöh	Sä/ron	Tyre
Fä'rö	Scé/va	
Phe-ni/ce	Sé—	Z.
		Ze-lö/tës

# AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

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“THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES” is a general title, equivalent to the Life or History of the Apostles, and includes not only their *actions*, but also their *sayings*. There is no evidence that this heading, though early given to it, was assigned by the author. This book was variously styled by the ancient fathers “The Fifth Gospel,” “The Gospel of the Holy Spirit,” “The Gospel of the Risen Jesus Christ,” as terms descriptive of its contents and object.

The location of this book, in the volume of the New Testament, is, in several old manuscripts and versions, after the Epistles of Paul; but the fact of its being a species of appendix to the Gospels, and an introduction to the Epistles, justifies its present position. Lardner says, that Luke’s Gospel was undoubtedly placed in the Evangelicon, or with the other Gospels; and the Acts, probably, in the Apostolicon, or with the Epistles.

Its author was Luke, the Evangelist, as appears from the specific declaration of chap. i. 1, compared with Luke i. 3, who wrote this treatise as a second part, or supplement, to his Gospel, and was himself a witness to some of the events of his history. Acts xvi. 10 – 17, xx. xxi. xxvii. xxviii. The voice of the learned has identified him with the physician mentioned by Paul, Col. iv. 14. The style of this work resembles that of the Gospel according to Luke, and many cases of similitude have been adduced by the commentators. There are traces, not to be mistaken, of an acquaintance with the purer and classical models in the Greek language, such as would be likely to be familiar to an intelligent professional man. Besides the express statement of the introduction, and the uniformity of style, Luke’s authorship is substantiated by the joint assertion of Christian antiquity. This work is in all the Catalogues of the books of the New Testament. The Acts are referred to by Clement of Rome, A. D. 96,—Ignatius, A. D. 107,—Polycarp, A. D. 108,—Justin Martyr, A. D. 140,—Polycrates, A. D. 196. This book is quoted, and ascribed to Luke, by Irenæus, A. D. 178,—Clement of Alexandria, A. D. 194. Tertullian, A. D. 200,

calls it "Luke's Commentary," or history. Origen, A. D. 230, speaks of "Luke who wrote the Gospel and the Acts." Jerome, A. D. 392, says, "The Acts of the Apostles, another work of Luke the physician, whose praise is in the Gospel, (2 Cor. viii. 18,) contain the history of the infancy of the church." Augustine, A. D. 395, says that "Luke, after having written a Gospel, even one of the four which are in so high esteem, containing a history of Christ's words and works, and the time of his resurrection and ascension, wrote such an account of the acts of the Apostles as he judged to be sufficient for the edification of believers; and it is the only history of the Apostles which has been received by the church, all others having been rejected, as not to be relied upon." He adds, "Mark and Luke wrote at a time when their writings might be approved, not only by the church, but also by apostles still living." Chrysostom, A. D. 398, says, "Luke leaves us thirsting for more; but, if he had proceeded, it would have been only a repetition of like discourses and works, like dangers, difficulties, and sufferings." Eusebius, of the fourth century, says, "Luke, who was born at Antioch, and by profession a physician, being for the most part connected with Paul, and familiarly acquainted with the rest of the Apostles, has left us, in two inspired books, the institutes of that spiritual healing art which he obtained from them. One of these is his Gospel, in which he testifies that he has recorded 'as those who were from the beginning eye-witnesses and ministers of the word' delivered to him; whom, also, he says, he has in all things followed. The other is his Acts of the Apostles, which he composed, not from what he had heard from others, but from what he had seen himself." The early fathers multiply the same testimony. Araton, a sub-deacon in the church at Rome in the sixth century, versified the Acts of the Apostles.

The date of the work is fixed at about A. D. 64, since the history comes down to the period of Paul's imprisonment in Rome, yet does not relate his martyrdom, which is supposed to have occurred in A. D. 65 or 66, at that city, under the reign of Nero. The place of its composition was probably Greece or Rome, though nothing is certain respecting it. The expression in chap. i. 19, "their proper tongue," would imply that Luke was not in Judea. It has been conjectured that Theophilus was an honorable Gentile convert to Christianity.

Though entitled "The Acts of the *Apostles*," the object of the writer was clearly not to narrate the lives of all the Twelve, but simply and briefly to furnish a species of memoirs, or a journal of the most important travels and discourses, especially of the two great leaders — Peter, the Apostle to those of the circumcision; and Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles; not excluding the sayings and doings of several, as Stephen, Philip, and Barnabas, who were not strictly Apostles. He relates by no means all the history of Peter and of Paul, the chief heroes of the book; but, induced, apparently, by a desire of brevity, gives only some of the most important

## 12 INTRODUCTION TO THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

facts. The work may be deemed as a kind of ecclesiastical sketch-book of the most important transactions touching the infant church of Christ from the moment of his ascension, during nearly thirty years, until a short time before the great Jewish war. The importance of the book is seen, from the fact that, while there are four Gospels to describe the advent of the Messiah, there is only this authentic history of the planting of his church, during the first generation. As containing the fulfilment of our Lord's promise of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon his disciples, and the glorious opening of the gates of the church to receive the Gentiles, untrammelled by Jewish bondage, nothing can exceed the value and interest of this wonderful history; which is no longer deeply wonderful only because our eyes have seen it so long, and conned it over so familiarly. But let the rod of Heaven smite the rock, and the living stream will again flow.

The credibility of the Acts of the Apostles rests not only on the external evidence already suggested, but has likewise strong internal foundations. One branch of this proof, the undesigned coincidences between the history by Luke and the letters by Paul, has been beautifully and powerfully developed by Dr. Paley, in his celebrated *Horæ Paulinæ*. Besides, an air of truth pervades the whole book, an indescribable sense of reality, subtle as the principle of life, and also as powerful. The writer has fearlessly crowded his pages with names, dates, facts, that would prove the swift-condemning witnesses of a forger. He has boldly narrated the faults of his copeers, as if he were an uninterested spectator, and left the truth to take care of itself! Sublime faith of the disciple, who, like his Divine Master, coveted no sword but the sword of the Spirit to open the way for the coming of the Heavenly Kingdom on earth!

An intelligent understanding of this work, as of all ancient books, demands an acquaintance with ancient geography, history, and opinions, the manners and customs of both Jews and Gentiles, and the obstacles which sprang up in the path of the first preachers of Christianity, both from religion and irreligion,—from prince and from people,—from superstition and from philosophy. To elucidate these subjects, as well as to throw into their proper and natural perspective the great doctrines and duties of our faith, is attempted — how successfully, is left to the candid reader to judge — in the following pages.

THE  
ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

CHAPTER I.

*The Ascension of Jesus Christ, and the Choice of Matthias as an Apostle.*

THE former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that  
2 Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which he was  
taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given com-  
3 mandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: to whom

CHAPTER I.

1. *The former treatise.* Or, book; or, history; for so the Greek authorizes us to translate. A clear reference is here made to the Gospel according to Luke, to which the present work stands in the character of a second part, or supplement. The chain of direct connexion consists in the identity of the person to whom both works are dedicated.—*Theophilus.* We possess no knowledge of this individual, beyond the mere mention of his name in this passage, and in Luke i. 3. But this fact suggests the probability that he was a Christian of distinction and esteem, a friend of the writer, perhaps a civil officer, and, judging by the name, of Grecian origin.—*All,* i. e. a full history, not literally all. See John iv. 29, xxi. 25.—*Began both to do and teach.* This expression is sometimes construed as meaning, that the Gospel by Luke described the beginning of Christianity, with the labors of Jesus, but that the Acts was intended to relate its progress under the descent of the Holy Spirit, and the administration of the apostles; in fact, a species of second advent of Christ, in the extension and power of his religion. Others regard *began* as an intensive word, expressive of the greatness or difficulty of the work. But the more natural way is to consider the sentence a Hebrew idiom, meaning, simply, all that Je-

sus did and taught; “began” being redundant. A division is here made between what he did, and what he taught, or his miracles and his instructions, the two leading forms in which his spirit manifested itself.

2. *Until the day.* During the forty days intervening between the resurrection and ascension, our Lord continued to teach and to work miracles as before his death. Luke xxiv. 45; John xxi. 6.—*He was taken up.* Such expressions imply that he was not the cause, but the object, of the miraculous power exerted at his ascension. Ver. 9.—*Through the Holy Ghost,* or Spirit; i. e. through divine inspiration. It has been a question among critics, to what member of the sentence this clause properly belongs: some decide in favor of its present location; others connect it with “taken up;” and others with “had chosen.” The latter construction has the great weight of Griesbach in its favor, who points the original to read thus: “after that he had given commandments unto the apostles, whom he had chosen through the Holy Spirit.”—*Had given commandments.* Literally, “had commanded.” One of his principal commands was to “preach the gospel to every creature.” Mat. xxviii. 19; Mark xvi. 15.

3. *To whom also he showed himself.* As the apostles were chosen with a special reference to their

also he showed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: and being assembled together <sup>4</sup> with *them*, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, *said he*, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; <sup>5</sup> but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days

office as witnesses, Jesus appeared most frequently to them, though he did also to others, and at one time to more than five hundred. 1 Cor. xv. 6. — *After his passion.* This has a technical, theological sense, as applied to the Saviour. It means the sufferings of death. — *By many infallible proofs.* The length of time he appeared — during “forty days” — the number of persons to whom he showed himself, the variety of circumstances under which he appeared, his eating, walking, conversing, teaching, working miracles, showing his wounds, the identity of character he exhibited, constitute what may, without exaggeration, be called “infallible proofs,” that Jesus rose from the dead. This doctrine is fortified by so many evidences, that every shadow of doubt is dissipated. — *Forty days.* This length of time gives additional force to the argument for the resurrection. — *Speaking of the things, &c.* He still is interested in the great object for which he died. We recognize the same Jesus in the traits of his character, as well as the wounds of his body. The kingdom of God is ever uppermost in his thoughts; for this he lives, dies, and rises again. The instructions which he gave at this time are partly detailed in the Gospels, and in the present chapter; they probably related to the real character of his kingdom as a spiritual reign, and to the duties devolving upon the apostles in their untried condition.

4. *Being assembled together with them.* Having met with them. Margin\* reads, “eating together;” but it is unauthorized. The more exact version would be, “having assembled them together,” taking the Greek participle in the middle voice, and with the active sense. Jesus brought them together by his own summons. — *Not depart from Jerusalem.* No revenge was harbored in the bosom of the Crucified One. The city of Caiaphas, and Pilate, of scribes and Pharisees, of the cross and the tomb, was to be the central point of the gospel radiation. Here was the seat of worship of the one God, and the solemn associations of centuries. Here were the chief witnesses to the life, death, and resurrection, of our Lord; here the most important scenes in the Divine tragedy. Here God would vindicate his Son by the descent of the Spirit on his apostles. It was not without good reasons that he bade them remain in “Jerusalem.” — *The promise of the Father,* i. e. the promise of the descent of the Holy Spirit made by the Father through Christ. Luke xxiv. 49; John xiv. 16, 17, 26, xv. 26, xvi. 7. Here, as elsewhere, the Father is represented as the primary source of all spiritual influence and life.

5. *With water — with the Holy Ghost.* See Mat. iii. 11; Luke iii.

\* By the marginal readings are meant those made by King James' translators, but which they considered inferior to the text, and therefore threw into the margin.

6 hence. — When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his

16; John i. 33. The prediction of John the Baptist was now to be consummated. He baptized, indeed, with the purifying element of water; but there would be a baptism, under the new dispensation, of a higher degree,—a baptism of a holy breath, wind, chap. ii. 2, spirit, a still more subtle element. The fine figure contained in the original is lost in our translation, and the unauthorized addition made of the article “the.” Note on Mat. iii. 11. To be baptized with a holy Spirit, was to be imbued with it. — *Not many days hence.* This appears to be spoken only a short time before the ascension, which, according to Carpenter, occurred about nine days only before the feast of Pentecost and the gift of the Spirit.

6—12. Parallel with Mark xvi. 19; Luke xxiv. 50—53.

6. *Were come together.* On a different occasion from that spoken of in ver. 4, 5, and upon the Mount of Olives, ver. 12. — *Wilt thou at this time restore again.* Or, simply, “restore.” This question reveals in the clearest manner the state of the apostles. Their minds were still haunted with their old visions of royalty, temporal sovereignty. The fall of Jesus had for a time damped their ardor; but, when he came forth the conqueror over death and the grave, all their hopes came to life again with him. They saw their Master king, Israel triumphant, and Roman and Greek bend the knee in subjection. True, in common with their countrymen, they believed that pure religion was to be the great end of this Jewish victory; that the worship of one God was to be estab-

lished over the earth. But much selfishness and ambition had room to mingle in this brilliant dream. They would be the ministers and favorites of the king, and they now ask him, with assured tone, the question of the text. Of the great event itself they had no doubt: they simply confine their inquiries to the point of time when it would occur, and whether it would take place immediately. He had told them to await the coming of the Spirit at Jerusalem: they virtually ask, in their simplicity, whether it was to the inauguration of the new sovereign to his office. — *To Israel.* It was the favorite idea of the Jews that their Messiah would, at his coming, elevate their nation to a far prouder eminence than it enjoyed even under their most powerful kings, David and Solomon, and that Jerusalem would become the metropolis of the earth.

7. *It is not for you to know, &c.* This was a rebuke of their idle curiosity and their worldly ambition. There was no time now to make explanations. They were not yet prepared to know the true character and the probable period of Christ’s kingdom being established, but their prejudices would, after a while, wear away. God had reserved, too, in his own omniscience, the great epochs of Christianity. Even Christ professes his ignorance of them, and thus acknowledges the superiority of the Father, either by implication or assertion. Mat. xxiv. 36; Mark xiii. 32; John xiv. 28. Various times and seasons have been reserved in the divine jurisdiction; as the period of Christ’s coming, which took place at

own power. But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the

the overthrow of Jerusalem and Judaism; the prevalence of Christianity over the earth; the end of the world; the day of our death; the eras of retribution and immortality. Deut. xxix. 29. Man can calculate the revolutions of Saturn, or Halley's comet, but not the times and seasons of human affairs. It has been wisely and kindly ordered that we should be ignorant of many things. Knowledge is not always a blessing. If we knew the events of the future, we might be distracted in our devotion to the duties of the present. An acquaintance with our coming fortunes would be inconsistent with free choice and human agency. The obscurity before us leads us to watch, and pray, and labor. "The veil which covers the face of futurity is woven by the hands of Mercy." — *The times or the seasons* Wakefield renders, "those seasons of time." — *Hath put in his own power.* Rather, "disposed according to his own authority."

8. *But ye shall receive power, &c.* This clause would be more properly rendered, as in the English margin, "but ye shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you." The word "power" is different in the original from the word thus rendered in ver. 8, and which is better translated "authority." Though it was not given them to know the times and seasons, they would receive the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit — a prediction which was soon fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. They had the greatest work to do, and they needed the greatest assistance. — *Witnesses unto me.* Literally, "martyrs." Not that they would certainly be put to death,

though many of them were killed for the sake of the gospel; but the word refers more to the *witness* they would bear than the *manner* in which they would bear it. The apostles were selected with a special reference to this end, that having first been admitted to an intimate acquaintance with the life, character, miracles, and teachings, of our Lord, with his death, resurrection, and ascension, they should go forth to bear testimony of all they had seen and heard, both to Jews and Gentiles. Hence their preaching principally consisted, at first, of a recapitulation of historical facts. Chap. ii. 22 - 36, iii. 12 - 23, iv. 8 - 12, v. 29 - 32. — *Jerusalem.* The apostles were naturally to commence their work at the head-quarters of the Jewish faith, and the scene of the most eventful passages in the life of the Master.

— *Judea — Samaria.* The southern portion of the country, including the capital, and the adjoining northern province. Chap. viii. 1, 4. When driven by persecution from Jerusalem, they were to spread over the surrounding regions. — *Unto the uttermost part of the earth.* An announcement, showing at once the grand and universal plan of Jesus to establish his kingdom in no narrow Jewish limits, but to circumscribe the whole Gentile world. The very fact of such a conception furnishes presumptive evidence of a more than mortal wisdom. No mind had yet embraced the whole earth, either in its ambitions, or its benevolent regards. It was reserved for Jesus to draw a scheme from the divine councils, which should eclipse the visions of both warriors and philosophers. Sublime prospect, not yet

9 uttermost part of the earth. — And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received 10 him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white

of sight, but still of faith and hope! That Christianity was preached during the apostolic age throughout most of the known world, is proved by Rom. x. 18; Col. i. 6, 23.

9. *While they beheld.* It was important to state that the ascension took place in the full view of spectators. — *He was taken up.* The passive voice is used, implying that he was not the actor, but the object. He was subject to the Father's power. Gen. v. 24; 2 Kings ii. 10, 11. We learn, from ver. 12, that the Mount of Olives was the scene of this transaction, and, more definitely, that part of it near Bethany. Luke xxiv. 50. We are also informed, by Luke xxiv. 50, 51, of the interesting circumstance, that Jesus gave a farewell benediction to his disciples, and, while thus engaged, was parted from them and carried up into heaven; and, Mark tells us, sat on the right hand of God. Many questions have been asked as to the locality, if any, which is here spoken of, the disposition of the body of our ascended Lord, &c. But these are subjects altogether inexplicable. Popular feeling has assigned a place for heaven above us, beyond the stars; but natural philosophy teaches us that *above* and *below* are relative, not absolute, terms; and that the blue concave, dotted with stars, is as much below our feet and our earth as above them. Human sagacity cannot pierce that cloud which received him out of their sight. Whether heaven be a state, or a place, or both, is left to the Omnipotent One. It is enough that Jesus was taken visibly from earth, and thus opened the door

of faith to the aspirations of his followers. Neander remarks, "How could the resurrection of Christ have been to the disciples the groundwork of their belief in everlasting life, if it had been again followed by his death? With the death of Christ, the faith, especially in his resurrection and reappearance, must again, of necessity, have sunk away. Christ would again have appeared to them an ordinary man; their belief in him, as the Messiah, would have suffered a violent shock. How, in this manner, could that conviction of the exaltation of Christ have formed itself within them, which we find expressed in their writings with so much force and precision?"

" Messiah now has gone before  
To the blest realms of light:  
O, thither may our spirits soar,  
And wing their upward flight.

" To guide us to thy glories, Lord,  
To lift us to the sky,  
O, may thy Spirit still be poured  
Upon us from on high."

10. *Looked steadfastly toward heaven.* The conduct of the spectators is what we should naturally expect it to be, in the contemplation of so august a scene. They followed with earnest and wondering gaze the vanishing form of their Master and Friend. Their fixed attention, moreover, enhanced the value of their testimony to the truth of this important fact. It was open day; not one, but many, were present; and there could be no opportunity for deception. — *Two men — in white apparel.* Angels, or heavenly messengers, who are often represented as clothed in white, the emblem of purity and glory. Matt. xxviii. 3;

apparel ; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven ? this same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into

Mark xvi. 5 ; Luke xxiv. 4 ; John xx. 12 ; Rev. iii. 4, 5.

11. *Ye men of Galilee.* Most of the disciples at first were from Galilee. — *Shall so come in like manner.* The usual understanding of this verse has been, that Jesus would personally and literally descend, at some future time, in the clouds, with angels, to judge the world. We learn that he did appear in person to Paul. Chap. ix. 5 ; 1 Cor. xi. 23. But the verse before us by no means asserts as much as has been made out of it by a strained interpretation. It simply states that he will assuredly come again as he went ; which signifies, in plain language, that he would come again with power and great glory, for the "cloud" and the "angels" are emblematical of such a manifestation. The certainty and glory of his coming would be like the certainty and glory of his going. The event referred to was the establishment of his religion, upon the destruction of the holy city, temple, and people, of the Jews, by the Romans. Gloriously he ascended, and gloriously he came again, in the spreading abroad of his kingdom in the world. Thus Bishop Pearce remarks, that "it is not said that they should *see* him come, but that he should come in like manner as they saw him go : we may, therefore, suppose that only Jesus' coming to visit the Jewish nation in their destruction is here meant by the angels." If it should be objected, that this is too frigid an interpretation of the explicit prediction, "shall *so* come in like manner," let it be observed that the other exposition, which makes it a prophecy of Christ's descent to judgment "with clouds — with an-

gels — with fire," is equally far removed from a literal construction of the passage, which it professes to be. For, when he ascended, all was love and tranquillity — a group of friends received his peaceful farewell — a cloud closed its soft folds around him — and, after he had disappeared, *two* angels merely, so habited as to be called men, mildly addressed the bereaved disciples with words, such as they then needed, of consolation and encouragement. All was beautifully in accordance with the spirit of Christianity. But the descent, of which this ascension is called the prototype, is represented, in the common belief, as something very different, by those who contend that the words "so," and "in like manner," are to be taken in a strict sense. Christ, in their view, is to come in dread array, with flaming hosts, and sounding trumpets, borne on the crimson clouds of heaven, and descending to take vengeance on his enemies. The point is this : that *none* interpret this verse literally ; that those who profess to do so, after all, represent the second coming of Christ as quite different from his pacific ascension, and deviate wholly from a rigid construction of the words signifying comparison ; and that, therefore, the field being open for figurative interpretations, the one is the most probable which identifies the return of Christ, here spoken of, with the glorious extension of his kingdom upon the ruins of Judaism.

There are two considerations which strengthen this position. One is the direct fact, that our Lord predicted his coming during that generation, which could only have been in the

- 12 heaven. — Then returned they unto Jerusalem, from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a Sabbath day's journey. 13 And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James *the son of Alpheus*, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas *the brother of James*.

destruction of Jerusalem, and the promulgation of his faith. Matt. xxiv. 27, 30, 31, 34, xxvi. 64; Mark ix. 1; Luke xvii. 24, 30, xxi. 27, 31, 32, 36. The other consideration is, that it was far better adapted to the immediate purposes of comfort and encouragement, for which the angels apparently spoke, to announce the triumphant advent of Christ in that generation, than in some thousands of ages to come. In this, as in other cases, preconceived opinions may lead us to misunderstand Christianity almost as much as they misled the Jews, unless we put ourselves upon our guard against them. Recent fanaticism has taught us the value of sobriety and calmness in expounding prophecies, especially those relating to the second coming of Christ.

12. *Returned they unto Jerusalem.* Though their faith is weak, and their spiritual vision dim, respecting the nature of their Master's kingdom, they yet obey him with implicit fidelity, and return to the city of the crucifixion. — *Mount called Olivet*; i. e. the Mount of Olives, as elsewhere called; the high ridge lying east of Jerusalem, over the brook Kedron. — *A Sabbath day's journey.* This distance was determined, not by the authority of the law of Moses, but by the Jewish Talmudists and Rabbins. There is some discrepancy of opinion on the subject among the learned; but the general decision is, that the Sabbath day's journey, or the extent which the Jews might travel on that day, was

about seven stadia, or furlongs, or two thousand cubits, making a little less than one of our miles. This was supposed to be the greatest distance of any part of the Jewish camp from the tabernacle, in their journey from Egypt. It is supposed to have been about ten days after the ascension of Jesus, that the Spirit descended on the apostles, at the feast of Pentecost. For he was crucified at the time of the Passover, appeared about forty days, and the Pentecost was fifty days from the Passover.

13. *Into an upper room.* Literally, “*into the upper room.*” There is no probability that this was in the temple, as some contend, from Luke xxiv. 53. Their object in the temple was worship. Carpenter says, “It is reasonable to conjecture, that this was the chamber where our Lord ate the Passover, where also the apostles appear to have assembled on the evening of the resurrection. If so, it was in the house of a disciple.” The Jews were accustomed to use an upper room, as a place of retirement and devotion. — *Peter, &c.* The roll is called, and all are present, except the traitor. This list is apparently given to show that the sacred band was complete. It had withstood all the shocks that had fallen upon it, and was now to be reorganized and commissioned for the great work of the gospel. This catalogue corresponds with that of Mat. x. 2–4; Mark iii. 16–19; and Luke vi. 14–16; except some slight variation in the names, capable of being easily reconciled, and

These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, 14 with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, 15 and said, (the number of the names together were about a hundred and twenty,) Men and brethren, this scripture must needs 16

also changes in the order of record. See notes on the Gospels at the above places.

14. *Continued with one accord in prayer.* In which three things are observable, their perseverance, their union, and their devotion. They already begin to rise into a higher spiritual life, while awaiting the descent of the Holy Spirit. The bands of Jewish prejudice are loosed, and they emerge more and more into the liberty of Christ. Luke xxiv. 53.—*The women.* We know that Peter, and probably others of the twelve, were married. Mat. viii. 14; 1 Cor. ix. 5. Those who ministered to Jesus, and who were "last at his cross, and earliest at his grave," were also there, in all likelihood. Notes on Mat. xxvii. 55; Luke viii. 3. If Christianity has done much for woman, woman has also done much for Christianity. Faithfully did her heart at first respond to its divine call, and in all ages she has contributed her full quota, or more, to swell the noble army of martyrs, confessors, and disciples.—*Mary, the mother of Jesus.* Something pathetic is suggested by this mention of the mother of the Crucified and the Ascended. A sword had pierced through her soul, but a healing balm had followed the wound. Luke ii. 35, 51. The early sayings she had treasured up in her heart, had come to pass. Thought of bliss—her son was the Messiah! But he died. No; he had risen and ascended on high; and he had left his mother, not alone in a hostile world, but in the home of his be-

loved John, and surrounded by the affectionate band of believers. This is the last time Mary is mentioned in the New Testament; and here she is not spoken of with any of that idolatrous homage, since superstitiously and impiously given her by a large portion of the Christian world. Nothing is known with certainty of the rest of her life, or of her death.—*His brethren.* See notes on Mat. xii. 46; John vii. 3, 5.

15. *In those days.* Between the ascension and the day of Pentecost.—*Peter.* The once fallen, but now penitent and forgiven, apostle, resumes his place, and takes the lead, in speech and action, natural to his impulsive disposition.—*The number of the names.* Or, "persons;" for such is the force of the idiom.—*A hundred and twenty.* Whether it was a designed coincidence or not, this was the same number required for a Jewish council. The whole company of disciples was much greater at this time, as we learn from 1 Cor. xv. 6. The reason of choosing Matthias was to restore the number of twelve, to fill the deserted post with a new witness of Jesus' life, and another preacher of his gospel.

16. *Men and brethren.* Idiom for "brethren."—*This scripture.* The passage of Scripture he refers to is stated in ver. 20, viz. Ps. lxix. 25, and cix. 8.—*Must needs.* Or, "it is fit."—*Fulfilled.* The passage of the Psalms, uttered by David, is applicable to, is verified in, the case of Judas. The punctuation of Griesbach,

have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that 17 took Jesus. For he was numbered with us, and had obtained 18 part of this ministry. Now this man purchased a field with the 19 reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood.

which is deserving of great respect, permits "fulfilled" to be read in connexion with "concerning Judas." David did not speak concerning Judas; but what he did speak, under a spiritual influence, was made good in the case of that traitor.— *Which was guide to them that took Jesus.* Mat. xxvi. 47, 48; John xviii. 2, 3. The treachery of Judas consisted in betraying the retirement of Jesus to the knowledge of his enemies, and pointing him out by a kiss of pretended friendship.

17. *Numbered with us.* Judas was enrolled in the catalogue of the twelve by Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Why he was chosen by Jesus we cannot fully comprehend; yet we can perceive the great value of Judas' testimony to the innocence of his Master, (Mat. xxvii. 4,) because he had been received as a companion and friend, and would have readily made known to the Jews any thing criminal, seditious, or blameworthy, in the private character of Jesus, especially as it would have tended to exculpate his own wickedness. — *This ministry.* Or, "this service." The desertion of so high a post as that to which he had been called—the work of human salvation, the service of God—necessarily aggravated tenfold his guilt.

18, 19. These verses are, beyond doubt, not a part of Peter's address, but parenthetical, thrown in as explanatory by the historian. For it was not necessary to inform the dis-

ciples then present of the fate of Judas, which, it is said, was well known in Jerusalem; and the introduction, also, of Aceldama, with its meaning, was evidently designed for the information of foreigners, not natives. — *This man purchased a field.* This is not inconsistent with Mat. xxvii. 7, where it is said the chief priests negotiated the purchase of the field. For in the Scriptures, and other writings, a man is said, by an idiom of speech, to *do* that which he *causes*, or *occasions*, to be done. Gen. xlvi. 38; Rom. xiv. 15. Judas was *the means* of the field being bought, and he furnished the money. — *Falling headlong, &c.* This description presents no real discrepancy with the statement in Mat. xxvii. 5, as soon as we understand that Matthew simply relates the act of suicide, but that Luke informs us of what took place subsequently, viz. that the suspended body fell, and was dashed to pieces, or burst asunder. Agitated with remorse and terror, and destitute of all self-possession, it was not strange that Judas should secure his weight in so frail a manner as to fall from the support in the act of hanging, and then the other consequences might naturally follow. — *Known unto all;* i. e. it was generally known, it was "common talk;" not that each individual knew it. — *In their proper tongue.* Or, better, "peculiar dialect," which was Aramaic or Syro-Chaldaic, a species of later Hebrew. This has been viewed as

For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be 20 desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and, His bishopric let another take. Wherefore of these men which have companied 21 with us, all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that 22 he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness

proof that Luke was writing for Gentile converts, and by some that he was himself of Gentile origin, as he uses the third person, "their."—*Acel-dama*. A Syro-Chaldaic term, composed of two words, meaning "field of blood." See Mat. xxvii. 6, 8.

20. This verse connects well with ver. 17, from which it is separated by the parenthesis of ver. 18 and 19. — *In the book of Psalms*. The apostle now proceeds to quote what he referred to in ver. 16, as spoken by David. — *Let his habitation, &c.* Ps. lxix. 25. This is a quotation, with some variations, from the Septuagint version. The Psalmist imprecates the most terrible evils upon his enemies, that their habitation might be desolate, and none dwell in their tents. Peter applies this, by way of *accommodation*, to Judas, to describe his utter and dreadful destruction. In the Psalms, the plural is used, but the apostle puts it in the singular, as more applicable to Judas. — *His bishopric, &c.* Ps. cix. 8. This rendering betrays its Episcopalian origin. The simple and proper translation in the Psalms, and here, is, "Let another take his office." The apostle, most evidently, had no reference whatever to any orders or dignities in the Christian church, but employs, as in the previous clause, an ancient scripture in a rhetorical, not a prophetic, manner, to describe more strikingly recent events. The quotations of the New Testament, from the Old, lose much of their force, when subjected, as they too often are, to a rigid preconceived theory of interpretation.

21, 22. *These men which have companied with us.* Were in terms of intimate intercourse with us. The Seventy are, perhaps, alluded to, as they had been despatched on a missionary tour by our Lord himself. Luke x. 1. — *Went in and out among us.* Or, "consorted with us," or passed his life in our society and presence. — *From the baptism of John.* The sense is ambiguous, at first sight, but the meaning is, from the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist, or the commencement of his ministry. — *Be ordained.* We must not associate any of our English ideas with this phrase, for the original is simply "be" or "become;" the whole reading thus, "must one become a witness with us," &c. The great office of the first teachers was to bear witness to the life, death, and resurrection, of Christ, and their preaching consisted very much of an historical sketch of his career. — *His resurrection.* This was the most important part to be borne witness to, as it was the crowning and confirming of all the rest with an authentic divine seal of approbation. But, in thus mentioning the resurrection, might not the apostles have still entertained some of the feeling that dictated the inquiry in ver. 6, and regarded the rising of Jesus from the tomb as the prelude to the glorious temporal Messianic kingdom, rather than as the opening of the gates of immortality almost visibly to the spiritual believer? Dark shades lingered around the apostles' minds, even for many years after this period. The full liberty and spirituality of Christ was too

23 with us of his resurrection. — And they appointed two, Joseph 24 called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of 25 all *men*, show whether of these two thou hast chosen, that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by

lofty an idea to be at once received. Gal. ii. 11 – 14. These verses describe the qualifications necessary for a candidate to the apostolic office, that he should have been with the disciples as an eye-witness of the life and death of Jesus.

23. The speech of Peter is concluded, and we can gather nothing from it, or any of the subsequent proceedings, to justify the Roman Catholic idea of his authorized superiority over the other apostles and over the church. He gives advice, not commands. He appears as an equal among equals, not as a superior among inferiors. He calls the disciples, not children, but brethren. He takes the lead, but it was his nature, not his office. — *They appointed two.* The whole matter is conducted on Congregational principles. All have a voice and authority, and, so far as the history testifies, one as much as another. There seem to be no principalities and powers one above another; but a genuine Christian brotherhood, in which zeal and ability took only the natural supremacy assigned them by the Creator. Blessed model, worthy of the honor and imitation of all ages! — *Joseph.* He is only mentioned here, and nothing further is known of his history. From the epithet bestowed on him of "Justus," the Just, as well as from the fact of his appointment as a candidate for apostleship, a favorable inference remains respecting his character. — *Matthias.* We learn nothing more of the fortunate candidate than of the other. Oblivion has fallen upon his life, labors, and death. The sum of our knowledge

is, that he "thus closed up and made whole the sacred ring, which had been so violently broken."

24, 25. *Lord*, i. e. God. No one can suppose, that, after the frequent injunctions of Christ to his disciples to pray to the Father, they would so soon violate his commands, and address their petitions and adoration to him. Dr. Adam Clarke says that they laid the matter before God, that he might decide it by the lot. We find, also, the disciples adapting their prayers to the occasions in which they were placed, and not adhering rigidly to the formula given them in the Lord's prayer. Mat. vi. 9. — *Knowest the hearts, &c.* A designation of the omniscient God. Jer. xvii. 10. — *Show*, i. e. in the manner about to be employed, that of the drawing of lots. — *Whether of these two.* Which of these two. — *Ministry.* Literally, "service." — *That he might go to his own place.* Or, "proper place." While Judas was an apostle, he was out of his proper place; but, after he had acted the traitor, and committed suicide, he went to that state or place congenial to him, or proper for him; or, as the various reading, not wholly unworthy of notice, has it, "the just or fit place." He met with his deserts. Matthias was chosen to fill the station vacated by an unfaithful incumbent. Various senses, which it is unnecessary to state, have been assigned to the phrase, "to go to his own place;" but the above seems to accord best with the facts of the case, the usages of language, and the nature of retribution. Judas was covetous. He probably was impatient to have Je-

transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. And they 26 gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

sus declare himself openly as the Messiah. Greedy of the paltry sum of money, he betrayed him into the hands of his enemies, perhaps supposing that it would lead to a public avowal of his Messiahship; at any rate, that the worker of such wonderful deeds could free himself when he pleased from his enemies. But when he saw his Master ready to be put to death, without making any effort for a rescue, he thought upon his innocence. His heart smote him for his black deed. He rushed forth and killed himself, under the impulse of hopeless remorse and bitter self-reproach. He went to his own state, or place, after death; to the one for which he had prepared himself, by his life on earth, and to which he was suited by his dispositions. In a word, he received according to the deeds done in the body. There is a profound significance in this passage. It touches the secret depths of retribution, and lays bare the realities of the spiritual world. Men go whither they are fitted to go. Punishments and rewards are not arbitrary or capricious, but take place naturally, according to the fixed laws of the Divine government. Evil is to him that is evil, and good to him that is good. Man reaps what he sows in the moral, as in the physical, world, here, and still more hereafter. Every one goes to his own place, or state, after death, by the natural operation of the great law of spiritual congeniality — the good assimilate to the good, the bad to the bad. Even the Grecian philosopher, Plato, had arrived at the lofty conviction that "The soul which has lived purely and soberly, dwells in a place suitable to itself." It is so, in some measure, in the present world; it will

be still more so in the societies of the spiritual state. To use the illustration of Olshausen, the soul, like a piece of iron between two magnets, hangs between the powers of light and darkness; and that element to which it yields the dominion, attracts it to itself, either up or down. Whither do *our* spirits tend, and for what society are *we* acquiring a love and congeniality? What more critical question than this can be pressed home upon our hearts — a question in whose answer is involved all the boundless fears and hopes of our being, all the vast interests that rise and spread over the infinite heavens, and go down to the ages of eternity?

26. *They gave forth their lots.* Some regard this act as the simple casting of a ballot; but the general and more correct opinion is that of Grotius, that they put their lots into two urns, one of which contained the names of Joseph and Matthias, and the other a blank, and the word, *apostle*. In drawing these out of the urns, the blank came up with the name of Joseph, and the lot on which was written the word *apostle*, came up with the name of Matthias. They thus deemed that their prayer was answered, and that Matthias was the man designated by Heaven for the holy office. The use of the lot is elsewhere spoken of in the Scriptures. Josh. xviii. 1-10; 1 Sam. xiv. 41, 42; Prov. xvi. 33, xviii. 18. It would not, of course, be proper to decide a question of right and wrong in this method, but only one of choice and moral indifference. Again, no countenance is given by this transaction to games of chance, to lotteries, and gambling, which call a thousand evil passions into exercise, and in which

## CHAPTER II.

*The Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. The Discourse of Peter, and the Growth of the Church.*

AND when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all

success itself is only the more certain way to ruin.

We learn in this first chapter the zeal of the apostles, that, even before the descent of the Spirit, they prepared themselves by completing their sacred, but broken, number, for the mighty work of planting the gospel throughout the then known world. They had regained their hearts, they had returned each "to his own place;" they girded on their armor anew, and, cheered by the sympathy and prayers of many others, the little band was ready to cast itself upon the mighty enterprise, and front danger and death for the Master's sake. They were attached, too, to the number twelve. It was a venerated number. It was the number of the sons of Jacob. The tribes of Israel were twelve. Jesus had chosen twelve. They felt that they could not go forth with the same strength and courage, unless the sad and gloomy void was filled; and they choose, with solemnity and prayer, the important substitute. Now their roll is complete; they are again **THE TWELVE**. Could any but a true and heavenly cause have thus sprung, phoenix-like, from the ashes of disaster and destruction, and in the name of a crucified leader, and after the treachery of one of the company, have plumed itself anew, and enlisted in the campaign of conquering the world? The voice of ages answers, No.

## CHAPTER II.

1. This chapter contains one of the most important events in the history of Christianity — the descent

of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples, and their illumination respecting the spiritual nature of the Messiah's kingdom. — *The day of Pentecost.* Or, the fiftieth day, so called from its being at that distance from the feast of the Passover. This was to celebrate the goodness of God by offerings of the first-fruits of the harvest, as the wheat was then gathered. These gifts consisted of two loaves of unleavened bread, of about three pints of meal each; also various domestic animals, as lambs, rams, &c. Lev. xxiii. 15-21; Deut. xvi. 9, 10. The Pentecost was one of the three great festivals, at which all the males were required to appear before the Lord. Ex. xxxiv. 22, 23. It was observed at the expiration of seven weeks after the Passover, and was hence called the "Feast of Weeks." It occurred in the month Sivan, or about the last of our May. Besides its primary object, to commemorate the ingathering of the harvest, it was also a memorial of the giving of the law from Mount Sinai, fifty days after the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, and was therefore called by them "the joy of the Law." The feast of the Passover is celebrated by some Christian churches as the anniversary of the crucifixion, under the name of *Easter* — a word derived, as is said, from *Eostre*, a goddess to whom the ancient pagan Britons kept a festival at that season of the year. The feast of Pentecost is also observed under the name of *Whitsuntide*, or *White Sunday*, because this was one of the stated seasons of baptism in early times, and the persons who received that rite

with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound,<sup>2</sup> from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them <sup>3</sup>

put on white garments, as emblems of spiritual purity. — *Was fully come.* Or, simply, “had arrived.” The fact that it was one of the great Jewish festivals accounted for what was afterwards related of the foreign Jews being present, ver. 5–11, in great numbers. — *They were all, &c.* Probably not only the Twelve, but also other disciples, perhaps the one hundred and twenty of chap. i. 15. The unanimity of their proceedings is worthy of note, especially as even the apostles were before often contending who should be the greatest; but their spirit is now changed and changing. Instead of the dreams of worldly ambition, they begin to comprehend the realities and glories of spiritual things. At what place they now met is matter of conjecture, but they would most likely use the same apartment spoken of in chap. i. 13. Whether the descent of the Spirit occurred on the last day of the week, the Jewish Sabbath, or on the first day of the week, the Christian Sabbath, is also unknown, and immaterial.

2. It is at least an interesting coincidence, that, at the same time of year the law was given from Mount Sinai, the spiritual influence promised by Christ to his disciples, John xiv. 16, 26, xvi. 13, descended upon them in a miraculous and powerful manner, giving them the gifts of tongues, emblems of their call to preach the gospel, strengthening their faith in their Master, and enlightening their minds as to the spirituality of his religion. — *A sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind.* It is not said there *was* any wind; on the contrary, the sound would have been the more remarkable in the perfect

stillness of the elements, and pointed out more clearly the coming of a power and Spirit from on high. It appeared to descend from above, whether we naturally look for the seat of infinite wisdom. It filled the whole room or house where they were sitting, as with an all-pervading presence. We behold, on this occasion, the Father of spirits teaching his children in the flesh by means of material sounds and sights, appealing to the soul through the ear and eye, and thus conveying an impression that would leave an indelible stamp upon the memory and the imagination. Those who see not the beauty of this scene should remember what is man, and through what avenues he can be approached in the most effective manner. Compare Ex. xiii. 21, 22, xix. 16–19; 1 Kings xix. 11, 12. It is worthy of recollection, in this passage, that the same word, in Greek, means “wind,” and “Spirit;” and that thus the descent of a *spiritual* influence was not inappropriately symbolized by the sound of a rushing mighty *wind*. It may be mentioned, as a singular fact, that the Arabs regard Muhammad as the Paraclete, or Comforter, predicted by Jesus in John xvi. 7, and other passages.

3. *Cloven tongues, like as of fire, &c.* Or, “tongues, as it were of fire, distributed themselves and settled upon each of them;” the word “cloven,” in the original, referring not to the tongues themselves being divided, but to their being distributed to the company present. This verse, like the last, bears the clearest impress of an eye-witness; there is the vivid delineation of one who heard and saw these things. Succeeding the sound of a mighty wind,

4 cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with

addressed to the ear, appeared lambent shapes, as of tongues of fire, separating and alighting upon each of the disciples, an emblem appealing to the eye. "Seeing is believing." God teaches much by signs, and his revelation, as well as his creation, is filled with countless instances of this species of instruction. Fire is often spoken of in the communications of the Deity to man in the Old Testament. He appeared to Moses in a flaming bush; on Mount Sinai at the giving of the Law in thunders, and lightnings, and fire; and in a pillar of fire by night to the Israelites on their journey through the wilderness to the Promised Land. An appearance, as of a dove, was seen descending from the opened heavens, and alighting upon Jesus at his baptism. The tongues, as of fire, which were now seen attaching themselves to the disciples, were designed, like all miraculous displays, to awaken the wonder and awe of the beholders — to connect the descent of the Spirit with the individuals to whom it was given, to intimate, emblematically, the office in which they were to act, as preachers of the gospel. They were now baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire. Mat. iii. 11. They were touched with a live coal from off the altar, and would henceforth speak with tongues of a fiery, melting, all-persuasive eloquence. Is. vi. 6; Luke xxi. 15. We soon have specimens of their new power in ver. 37, chap. iv. 13. Grotius remarks that, as the confusion of tongues at Babel dispersed mankind abroad, the gift of tongues on the day of Pentecost collected them together again from their dispersion into one people.

4. *Filled with the Holy Ghost.* Or, the Holy Spirit of God, which aided them in doing what would otherwise have been impossible to man. How far they had been imbued with the same Spirit before, cannot be accurately determined, but it is evident, from the history, that, from this time forth, they were endued with a new and unprecedent power over their fellow-creatures, as well as penetrated with livelier convictions of the nature and purpose of the gospel, as an instrument of human salvation. John xx. 22. — *To speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.* This was in fulfilment of Mark xvi. 17. They were endowed with the power of speaking in languages, or at least dialects, with which they were before unacquainted. Any one who will consider, for a moment, the wonderful art of language in itself, the astonishing faculty of speech, the power of thinking in words, and conveying our conceptions and feelings to others through a set of arbitrary signs, the accumulated growth of ages, will be prepared to appreciate this miracle, by which all this marvellous use and capacity of language was suddenly conferred upon the disciples in the most perfect manner; so that the natives of different countries felt that they were listening to their vernacular tongue. Indeed, hardly any other sign could be more indicative of a greater than human wisdom and power, than the gift of tongues. At the same time, it answered the important purpose of enabling the disciples to preach Christ to multitudes from every part of the world, so that it might truly be said that "this thing was not done in a corner." It radiated the light of Christianity east and west, north and

other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there 5 were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude 6 came together, and were confounded, because that every man

south, over most of the known world. Unversed in human lore, the fisherman, the publican, could go forth, prepared to instruct distant cities and countries, and proclaim the glad tidings of great joy with all the force of language of a native-born speaker; so that Chrysostom said that the different tongues pointed out, as a map, what land each one should visit and occupy as the scene of his labors in converting the world. The fact that the gospel was preached, as our Lord prophesied it would be, over the world, before the close of that generation, Mat. xxiv. 14; Rom. x. 18; Col. i. 6, 23, can be accounted for only by the facts here stated, especially when we consider the want of education, and ignorance of letters, in most of the early preachers of our holy faith. The gift of tongues appears to have continued, though some distinguished critics have doubted the fact, during the apostolic age, and probably no longer, for it had then accomplished its end, and the truth would find other instruments for its diffusion. See 1 Cor. xii. 10, 11, 28, 30, xiv. 2-39.

“ We ask not, Lord, thy cloven flame,  
Or tongues of various tone;  
But long thy praises to proclaim -  
With fervor in our own.

“ We mourn not that prophetic skill  
Is found on earth no more;  
Enough for us to trace thy will  
In Scripture’s sacred lore.”

5. *Dwelling at Jerusalem.* The question is, whether these persons made the Holy City their permanent residence or not. Lightfoot supposes that they had removed thither from various parts of the world, at this particular time, in their earnest

expectation of the speedy advent of the Messiah; while the more general interpretation is, that they had come to attend the feast of Pentecost, and were only making Jerusalem a temporary abode. Ex. xxiii. 17. The male Jews were required to be present at the festivals of the Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles.—*Jews, devout men*, i. e. devout Jews; by whom is meant proselytes to the Jewish religion from various countries, or native Jews that had resorted thither for merchandise—an impulse that has never ceased to act upon their characters in all time.—*Out of every nation under heaven.* An hyperbole; a general, not an universal, term, meaning that there were persons from all quarters of the earth. As an incidental, but strong, corroboration of the text, the following passage is quoted from the Antiquities of Josephus respecting the feast of the Passover, and essentially the same was true of every great festival: “ At that time, the feast was approaching, in which the Jews are wont to eat unleavened bread. The feast is called the Passover, and is kept in remembrance of their departure out of Egypt: they observe it with great joy, and at this feast offer up more sacrifices than at any other, and an innumerable multitude of persons come up to worship God, not only out of Judea, but also from other parts.”

6. *This was noised abroad*, i. e. the report was spread. Hitherto there had been only the disciples together; but a vast multitude, impelled by curiosity, now gathered about them. Ver. 41. — *Every man heard them speak in his own language.* Or, bet-

7 heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed, and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not 8 all these which speak, Galileans ? And how hear we every man 9 in our own tongue, wherein we were born ? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamités, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in

ter, "dialect," or "idiom." This was the cause of the astonishment ; for nothing certainly could be more wonderful than to hear uneducated men, Galileans, speaking intelligibly in every peculiar idiom. It was the natural effect of a supernatural cause.

7, 8. *Galileans.* It would have been wonderful to hear any men, from any district, speak in this way ; but it was thrice wonderful that the Galileans should be able to do it. For they were from an ignorant and despised country, where a peculiar dialect or brogue was in use, Matt. xxvi. 73, Mark xiv. 70; and which was regarded with peculiar contempt by the rest of the people, John i. 46, vii. 52, as an abandoned region. Thus were the declarations of 1 Cor. i. 26, 27, fulfilled. — *In our own tongue, wherein we were born.* Each one heard his peculiar vernacular dialect or idiom. The disciples not only spoke each language, but spoke it well, so that the natives, themselves being judges, were astonished at their correctness. Though there were some languages generally known, as the Greek, Hebrew, and Latin, — the Greek, particularly, being a species of universal tongue, as the French is now in most countries of Europe, — yet there was a vast number of inferior dialects and branches, spoken in different districts and provinces, with all which these inspired men were specially gifted. Not that each individual spoke all, but one was endowed with one, and another with another.

9. *Parthians.* These were Jews, who had either been born, or who had lived, in Parthia. This country

was situated south-east of the Caspian Sea, in Asia, was bounded on the east by Aria, on the west by Media and Hyrcania, on the north by Hyrcania, and on the south by the desert of Carmania, and was surrounded by mountains. Some ancient writers derive the origin of this people from Scythia, a vast uncultivated region in the north of Asia. In the later period of the Roman republic, the Parthians had established an extensive empire. Their power continued about 400 years. Their language was Persian. They were a warlike nation, distinguished as horsemen and archers ; and, when fleeing in battle, they discharged their arrows behind them with great execution, so that their flight was often more formidable than their onset. — *Medes.* The enumeration of the different nations proceeds from the east to the west, and from the north to the south. Media was bounded on the north by the Caspian Sea, on the south by Persia, on the east by Aria, on the west by Assyria, and north-west by Armenia. The tract included by ancient Parthia and Media now belongs to modern Persia. Some gratify their taste for antiquity by deriving "Media" from "Madai," a grandson of Noah. Gen. x. 2. The Medes were at first subject to Assyria, as a province, but rose to independence, B. C. 820, which they enjoyed about three centuries, until they were merged in the Persian monarchy by Cyrus the Great, B. C. 559. They used the Persian language. They were a fierce and warlike people, and are often spoken of in the Scriptures in

Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and

connexion with the Assyrians and Persians. 2 Kings xvii. 6; Esth. i. 3, 14, 18, 19; Jer. xxv. 25; Dan. v. 28, vi. 8. Some of the Jews were carried as captives and colonized in the Median cities by their Assyrian and Babylonian conquerors, 2 Kings xvii. 6, and their descendants did not all return to the Holy Land on the rebuilding of the temple and Jerusalem. — *Elamites*. Gen. x. 22, xiv. 1. These were the inhabitants of Elam, or Elymais, a region of Persia situated on the Persian Gulf, between Babylonia and Persia, which formed a part of Susiana, of which Susa, or Shusan, was the capital, and which is now termed Khusistan. Is. xxii. 6; Jer. xlix. 34–39; Dan. viii. 2. Their language was also Persian. — *Mesopotamia*. This word signifies “between rivers,” i. e. between the Euphrates and the Tigris, and is called Padan Aram, the plain of Syria, Gen. xxiv. 10. The language of Mesopotamia was Syriac or Chaldaic. It is a very fertile region, and was anciently bounded by Assyria on the east, Babylonia and Chaldea on the south, Syria on the west, and Armenia on the north. It now belongs to the Turkish empire, under the name of El Djezirat, the peninsula. — *Judea*. It is a question with critics why Judea was mentioned in this connexion, as that was the country where they then were, and the disciples might be presumed capable of speaking that language naturally. Some suggest various readings, as India, Lydia, Idumea, Bithynia. Some account for it from the fact that the dialect of Judea was different from that of Galilee, to which most of the disciples at that time belonged. Mat. xxvi. 73; Mark xiv. 70. Or, again, it is said that Judea was enumerated because it was one country among

the rest, and the object of the catalogue was to show that they spoke all languages. Either of the two latter reasons relieves the difficulty. — *Cappadocia*. A province of Asia Minor, situated between the Euxine Sea and the Mediterranean, and bounded on the east by Armenia and Syria, south by Cilicia, west by Lycaonia, and north by Pontus and Galatia. 1 Pet. i. 1. The language was probably a mixture of Greek and Syriac. Acts xiv. 11. It was a wheat-growing region, and also distinguished for its excellent horses. The inhabitants were proverbial for their wickedness; but Strabo the geographer, Basil the Great, and Gregory Nazianzen, were natives of this country. — *Pontus*. This was also one of the eastern provinces of Asia Minor, bounded by the Euxine Sea on the north, by Armenia and Colchis on the east, Paphlagonia and Galatia on the west, and Cappadocia on the south. Mithridates the Great, king of Pontus, waged a long and bloody war with the Romans, but was conquered by Pompey, and the country subjected to the mistress of the world. Acts xviii. 2. The language probably resembled that of Cappadocia, as the two countries were at times under the same government. — *Asia*. This word is used in three senses — to denote the continent, the region of Asia Minor, and a smaller province, sometimes called *Ionia*, or *Proconsular Asia*, of which Ephesus was the capital. Acts vi. 9, xvi. 6, xx. 16; 1 Pet. i. 1. Here the Greek language was spoken, as this was one of the regions that claimed to be the birthplace of Homer, the greatest poet of Grecian antiquity.

10. *Phrygia*. Acts xvi. 6, xviii.

23. A country situated in the heart

11 strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of

of Asia Minor, and surrounded by Bithynia, Galatia, Cappadocia, Pisidia, and Lydia. The Greek was probably spoken here and in Pamphylia, with more or less of foreign admixtures. — *Pamphylia*. Another district of Asia Minor, lying south, upon the Mediterranean, bounded on the north by Pisidia, and inhabited by a Grecian colony. Acts xiii. 13, xiv. 24, xv. 38, xxvii. 5. — *Egypt*. This country was bounded by the Arabian Gulf and Arabia on the east, Libya on the west, the Mediterranean on the north, and Ethiopia on the south. It was about 600 miles long, and from 100 to 200 in breadth; watered by the Nile, which flows 1000 miles without any branches, and annually inundates a large portion of the country. Here was the origin of ancient art and science, and the ruins of Egypt and her pyramids still excite the wonder of the world. Many Jews settled in Alexandria after the Assyrian conquest. The language of ancient Egypt was Coptic. — *Libya*. A name sometimes standing for the whole of Africa; but it means here the country so called, lying west of Egypt, which was divided by the Romans into two parts, called *Marmarica* on the east, and *Cyrenaica* on the west. The latter is here meant. Cyrene, from which it took its name, was a large and beautiful city, lying about 10 miles from the sea. The same region was also called *Pentapolis*, from the five cities, Cyrene, Ptolemais, Apollonia, Arsinoë, and Berenice, which were scattered along the shores of the Mediterranean, and inhabited by multitudes of Jews. Mark xv. 21; Acts xi. 20, xiii. 1. — *Strangers of Rome*, i. e. Roman residents at Jerusalem. Rome was situated on the Tiber, in Italy, and

from small beginnings it rose to be the greatest and most powerful city in the world. Josephus relates that the Jews had eight synagogues there. A colony of Jewish captives lived near Rome, after their country had been conquered by Pompey. — *Jews*. Either natives of Judea, or descendants from Jewish parents in foreign countries. — *Proselytes*. Mat. xxiii. 15. These were converts from the Gentiles to the Jewish faith, of which the Rabbins made two kinds — *proselytes of righteousness*, or those who were entirely initiated into the religion of Moses, and enjoyed all its rights and privileges; and *proselytes of the gate*, who partially conformed to the Jewish ritual, obeying what were called the seven precepts of Noah; or to shun blasphemy to God, idolatry, homicide, incest, robbery, resistance to magistrates, and the eating of blood, or things strangled.

11. *Crete*. Crete was an island in the Levant, or the eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea, said by Pliny to be 270 miles in length, and about 50 in breadth. It is now called Candia. Christian churches were early formed in Crete. Acts xxvii. 7, 8, 13; Titus i. 5, 12. The language was Greek. It was anciently said to contain a hundred cities, was denominated the mistress of the sea, and upon it was situated Mount Ida, so distinguished in the Grecian mythology. — *Arabians*. Arabia, as is well known, is a large peninsula in the south-west part of Asia, bounded by the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, the Arabian Gulf, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, and Chaldea. Here occurred most of the wonderful events of the journey of the Israelites, during forty years in the wilderness, in search of the

God. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one 12 to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking, said, These 13 men are full of new wine. — But Peter, standing up with the 14

Promised Land. It bordered upon Judea, and probably contained many Jews. — *The wonderful works of God.* The faculty of speaking in various languages was not exercised in a trivial manner, but in accordance with the great purposes for which it was given, of proclaiming the truths of Christianity, and the wonderful events which God had accomplished respecting his Son Jesus Christ, especially his life, death, resurrection, and ascension. While, then, the miracle itself fulfilled the purpose of all miracles, of stirring the fountains of wonder and faith in the human heart, it was also made the vehicle of propagating to multitudes of minds, from all parts of the then known world, those sublime facts upon which the gospel rests, as on an impregnable foundation.

12, 13. *Amazed — in doubt, &c.* The description of the effects is as natural and life-like, as the description above of the cause that produced them. Every line bespeaks the eye and ear-witness. It would be more wonderful, and require more credulity to believe, that any writer could fabricate such a story as this from his own imagination, and exhibit so much *naturalness* in relating what is *supernatural*, than to credit the reality of every miracle in the New Testament. It is not the Christian that is most credulous, but the unbeliever. It is the infidel that rejects the belief of what is reasonable, to believe in impossibilities, to believe that man could make up such a fiction; so natural, so consistent in every part, so powerful in its effect upon mankind, so instinctive with new and ever-growing energy upon the spiritual life of the world. One party took the matter serious-

ly, and were astonished; the others made a jest of it, as if nothing remarkable had happened. Lightfoot conjectures that the latter were natives of Judea, who, hearing the disciples speak strange tongues, deemed it mere jargon. But this is unnecessary. Human nature shines out independently of national characteristics in these verses. The constitution and the habits of some would incline them more to wonder, others more to ridicule. Some have more marvellousness, others more mirthfulness. — *Full of new wine.* Rather, according to the original, “full of sweet wine.” There could be no new wine at this season of the year. There is no evidence that it was meant that they had drank wine lately made, but wine preserved sweet. This is said, by the ancient authors, to have distilled from the grape before it was pressed, and was in some way kept sweet, and was also very strong. Plutarch informs us that the ancients kept their wines, in a cool situation, sweet, a long time; and that they retained their intoxicating property. Horace, in the second book of his Satires, apparently speaks of such wines. If it had been “new,” unfermented wine, technically called *must*, the point of the mockery would have been lost, for that could not intoxicate. Mat. x. 25, xi. 19. The objection offered in this verse against the apostles is of a piece with many which have been offered against Christianity, in every age, by the scorner and the unbeliever — slanders, not reasons; jests, not arguments.

14. *But Peter.* The character of Peter, as exhibited in the book of the Acts, harmonizes perfectly with

eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judea, and all *ye* that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and 15 hearken to my words: for these are not drunken, as ye suppose, 16 seeing it is *but* the third hour of the day. But this is that which

the delineation of him in the four Gospels. We see the same impetuous being almost starting to life from every page of the history: bold, hasty, forward; and yet, with all this unity, there is change and progress; his downfalls teach him wisdom; the Spirit gives him elevation; he is equally bold, but more firm, henceforth, Acts iv. 13; still, however, long afterwards manifesting some identity with the Peter that denied his Master. Gal. ii. 11-14. — *With the eleven.* It has been inferred from this verse, that by *all*, in ver. 1, is meant only the Twelve, as they now are the only ones spoken of; but this conclusion does not necessarily follow, for Peter might have stood forth with the apostolic band as the leaders of the holy movement, but not as the only ones that had been touched by the heavenly spirit. — *Ye men of Judea*, i. e. native Jews of the country. — *All ye that dwell at Jerusal' em.* By "dwell" is here meant "sojourn," not live permanently. Under this term are included all, both Jews and proselytes, who had made a pilgrimage from foreign lands to attend the sacred festival, and were abiding for a time in the city, longer or shorter. Observe the respectful and conciliatory tone of the introduction of the apostle's speech, though a gross insult had been offered him. He rendered not railing for railing, but, contrariwise, blessing. 1 Pet. iii. 9; 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25. He is now clothed with a new courage; he can bear a rebuff better than in the courts of the high priest; he can confess his Lord openly before his enemies and scoffers. He earnestly entreats them to listen with candor to his remarks,

nor entreats in vain, as the sequel proves.

15, 16. *Seeing it is but the third hour of the day.* This is the reason assigned by the apostle why they could not have been intoxicated. According to the Jewish division of time, the third hour was nine o'clock in the morning. The Talmuds inform us that "it was not lawful for a man to taste any thing until he had offered his prayer." Josephus, the historian of the Jews, also confirms this view, and observes that the assembly, on sacred days, was not dismissed to breakfast until the sixth hour, or noon, that is, till after the sacred oblations and prayers. These authentic facts give great weight to the reasoning of Peter, and explain more fully to us what is only implied in his address, though it was well known to his auditors. The incidental illustrations of ancient manners and opinions, the slight and undesigned, and therefore more impartial and forcible, corroborations of the sacred writers, which have been collected by those learned divines, Lightfoot and Lardner, not to mention others, constitute a mass of proof in support of the genuineness and authenticity of the books of the New Testament, and of the credibility of the Gospel history, perfectly irresistible as an historical argument. — *But this is that, &c.* Peter had rebutted the charge of drunkenness by showing its impossibility on account of the hour of the day, and he now proceeds to assign a reason for what had occurred, and to justify himself by an appeal to their venerated Scriptures. It was a scene such as

was spoken by the prophet Joel, And it shall come to pass in the 17 last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and 18 on my servants, and on my hand-maidens, I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: and I will show 19 wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into 20 darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, *that whoso-* 21

the prophet himself had predicted. It was but making good the language of Joel ii. 28-32, iii. 15. When we consider the insuperable objections to assigning two senses to any passage of the Sacred Book, and then read the prophecy of Joel in connexion, we shall be convinced that he refers to the age of the Messiah. Joel first wrote in his book of his own times, and then of those succeeding them, down to the advent of the Messiah. Peter quotes his language as illustrative of, and fulfilled in, the events then occurring in the presence of his audience. It is a highly poetical description of a great revolution in human affairs at the period of the Messiah, but probably had no original, peculiar reference to the day of Pentecost. The apostle uses it rather rhetorically than theologically. The prophet predicts in general, the apostle applies his prediction to a particular case.

17-21. *In the last days.* By some, this phrase is understood to mean "in the days of the Messiah," the last great era of the world's history; but by others, with more probability, "the last days of the Jewish dispensation." It is observable that it is not found in any of the versions or the original Hebrew of Joel, but was added by the apostle as if to make a more suitable

introduction. The expression in the prophet is "afterward." The absence of accuracy, in the quotations of the Old Testament introduced into the New, betokens rather a use of them by way of accommodation than of rigid fulfilment.—*I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh.* The Spirit is not a person or a distinction of the Godhead, but an influence, a light, a warmth, issuing therefrom to enkindle mankind. The maxims of the Jewish schools were, "The Divine Majesty dwelleth not on any out of the land of Israel;" "The Holy Ghost is never imparted to any Gentile." But elsewhere it was said by the Rabbins, "When Moses laid his hands upon Joshua, the holy, blessed God said, 'In the time of the old text, each individual prophet prophesied; but in the times of the Messiah, all the Israelites shall be prophets.'" In the enumeration of "sons" and "daughters," "young men" and "old men," "servants and hand-maidens," is conveyed the idea that all classes, sexes, and ages, would be imbued with the most abundant knowledge of divine things. New and brighter revelations would be given to the world, and more universally diffused among all the masses of society.—*Wonders in heaven above, &c.* The description here given has no literal, pointed application, it is clear, to the

22 ever shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be saved. Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved

events on the day of Pentecost, except so far as they poetically set forth a great revolution in the political or religious affairs of the world, by images drawn from the heavenly bodies and meteorology. See the note on Mat. xxiv. 29; Luke xxi. 25, xxiii. 30; Rev. vi. 16. But this imagery is very much like that which our Lord uses to describe the overthrow of the Holy City.—*Vapor of smoke.* In the Hebrew, “pillars of smoke,” probably in reference to the appearance of the ascending smoke, and its resemblance to columns erected in the atmosphere.—*That great and notable day of the Lord.* The changes and convulsions here depicted find no counterpart after the advent of the Messiah, unless it be in the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the Jewish worship. The expression, “day of the Lord,” is often used in the Scriptures to denote a time of visitation and judgment, when punishment would be inflicted for national sins. Is. ii. 12; Ezek. xxx. 3; 1 Thess. v. 2.—*Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord.* Rom. x. 13. Rosenmuller and Kuinoel remark that this phrase means “to worship God,” but that Peter accommodated the language to his own times in the following sense: “To him who now receives the doctrine of Christ, it will be well; God will favor him.”—*Saved.* As a matter of history, it may be mentioned, in this connexion, that, though the Jews perished by myriads in the destruction of their city by the Romans, yet that not one of the Christians was among the number, for they had all fled, warned by prophecy, and taken refuge beyond the Jordan. There is a spiritual salvation, too, which is insured to

all that call upon the Lord, to all that call upon him in truth; to all that acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah, and embrace his religion.

22. *Hear these words.* Peter is earnest to induce them to hear him; he again and again appeals to their candor; he urges upon them arguments and reasons. He had cast off the charge of intoxication, and justified the outpouring of the Spirit by the predictions of one of their own prophets; he now draws the attention of his audience more directly to the great subject itself, “Jesus Christ and him crucified.”

—*Of Nazareth.* He hesitates not openly and boldly to avow the ignoble origin of his Master, however distasteful to his hearers. John i. 46, vii. 41, 52. How different from the scene in the hall of Caiaphas, when he was charged, Luke xxii. 59, with being a Galilean! What could have wrought so great a change, in so short a period, but just those events related in the gospel history, the resurrection and ascension of Christ, and the descent of the Spirit? The mighty effect must have had a mighty cause.—*A man approved of God.* Or “by God.” Better rendered by Thomson, “a man from God, pointed out to you,” &c.; or by Wakefield and others, “proved unto you to be a man from God,” &c. The “miracles, wonders, and signs,”—a Hebrew accumulation of terms to express the idea more forcibly,—were the most powerful proofs that Jesus was a man from God, as he often argued with the unbelieving Jews. Other proofs would be weak, unless these external ones took the lead and prepared the way for their introduction; as these also, in like manner, would.

of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:

be unavailing, unless they were accompanied and reënforced by the spiritual and internal auxiliaries of a spotless character, heavenly teachings, and general adaptation and harmony. Its miraculous characteristics are as inseparable from Christianity, as the bones from the body which they support and protect. United they stand, divided they fall. What view Peter took of the nature of Christ, is apparent from this verse. Could he have spoken of him as he has done here, if he regarded him as God, the infinite and eternal Being? Could he have used the distinction of persons he has made here, if Jesus and God were the same being, if they were literally one? Calmet, a Trinitarian writer, says, that, "in this passage, St. Peter speaks of Jesus Christ only as a prophet and a distinguished man, visibly sent out and approved by God. It was not necessary at first to preach his Divinity, lest he should offend his hearers, who were as yet incapable of receiving so sublime a truth." Erasmus says virtually the same. But this would have been a singular course for one so bold and open as Peter to take; and if he does not here preach the whole truth respecting the nature of Jesus Christ, where does he thus preach it? where does he proclaim that Jesus is God? Where can we look with more certainty to ascertain *what is Christianity*, apart from the instructions of the Master, than to the discourses of his inspired apostles? who had no motive for concealment, but were called upon, by the nature of their office and the wants of the world, to preach "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." When Peter calls Jesus a "man," doubtless he did not mean that he was, as has been unhappily phrased, "a mere man,"

for he was different from all others in his birth, capacities, and endowments. He was raised up for a sublime and special end. He was the first-born of a new creation; a new Adam, from whom should spring spiritually a new human race. He was more than prophet. He was a being designed to be the leader and harbinger, the father and author, of a new order of creatures.

But that Peter, while calling him "man," did not also secretly believe him to be God, and thus to be possessed of two natures, is most certain from the very nature of things. For to assert that the same being has two natures, is two persons in one, as is done in the present instance by many, is not at all a mystery, but a bold and palpable solecism, a flat contradiction of terms. It is to say, as has been forcibly urged by Yates, "that the same mind is both *created* and *uncreated*, both *finite* and *infinite*, both *able to do all things* and *not able*, both *ignorant of certain subjects* and *possessed of the most intimate knowledge of them*. If it be not certain that such a doctrine as this is false, there is no certainty upon any subject. It is in vain to call it a mystery; it is an absurdity, an impossibility."—*In the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know.* John xv. 24. This appeal to their personal observation was powerful, because it was founded on truth. They could not deny that they had seen the "miracles, and wonders, and signs." Peter, therefore, argued with them without fear of contradiction, for nobody could have the effrontery to gainsay the facts themselves, whatever explanation they might put upon them. The Jews acknowledged the wonderful works of our Lord, and we have thus the testimony not only of

23 him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified

friends, but of foes, to their reality. Mat. xii. 24; John iii. 2, xi. 47. Peter was addressing at this time the very individuals who had witnessed the cures performed by Christ, who had beheld the "signs" at the crucifixion; that the sun was darkened, and the earth, "sighing through all her works, gave signs of woe;" and his words must have sunk into their hearts with a thrilling and indescribable power, of which we cannot now conceive, and we cease to wonder at the effects described in ver. 37, 41.

23. *Delivered*, i. e. delivered up. The word, as it stands in the text, means directly the opposite of the original. Jesus was delivered up, or betrayed, by Judas to the Jews, and also by the Jews delivered up to the Romans.—*The determinate counsel and foreknowledge*, i. e. what God had willed and known. It might be objected, on the part of the cavilling Jews, that Jesus could not be the true Messiah, for God had rejected him, had suffered him to be put to death, in the most dishonorable manner, by the hands of wicked men. Surely this could not be the illustrious and eternal Messiah, the sublime hope of their nation, the King of the world! Peter removes this difficulty, by alleging that it was foreknown and foreordained that it should be so; the Messiah was to die, that from his death might come life to the world. It was the determinate, the defined and settled, counsel and foreknowledge of God that Jesus should die. It was not therefore a strange thing that had happened, but what was to be looked for in the ordinations of the Most High. Luke xxiv. 46. Still the apostle, by declaring it to have taken place according to the will and foreknowl-

edge of God, does not absolve the actors from the guilt of Christ's death, but speaks of the "wicked hands," or, if that phrase is doubtful, through the whole tenor of the discourse accuses them of a deep-dyed crime. The old question of God's foreknowledge and man's free agency is deep as the sea, and broad as the sea, and no man can fathom it. As Abbott has observed, "The human mind will probably ever continue to speculate in vain upon this subject. No one has yet resolved the theoretical difficulties in which it is involved, although, practically, no difficulty arises from it whatever."—*By wicked hands*, i. e. by the Romans, who, as being Gentiles, were called sinners. The Greek adjective, translated "wicked," means, literally, "without law," i. e. the heathen. The language of the apostle has, therefore, a peculiar significance, which is lost in our version. It is true, Jesus was put to death by wicked men, by hardened, sensual, cruel Romans, whose history was an epitome of blood: though Jesus prayed for their forgiveness, because they did not know, at least in this instance, what they did; they were unaware of the divine character and dignity of him upon whom they laid such ruthless hands. But Peter was now remonstrating with the Jews, and he would pierce their conscience with the peculiar remorse that they had delivered up their Messiah, their precious and glorious Deliverer, the hope of ages, into the hands of the heathen: it would have been sinful enough to put him to death themselves, but it was yet worse to employ the "sinners," the "dogs," of the uncircumcised, as they called the Gentiles, to torture and crucify their Lord of glory.

and slain : whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death : because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face ; for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved : therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad ; moreover also, my flesh shall rest in hope : because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life ; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.

**24–28. Whom God hath raised up.** In this bold and unrefuted assertion of the resurrection of our Saviour, we see evidence of its reality. It was but a few weeks ago since that event. A report to discredit it had been industriously circulated among the Jews, and the soldiers had been bribed to bear witness to its falsehood. Mat. xxviii. 11–15. But Peter, in the presence of assembled thousands, courageously vindicates that essential fact ; and, what is to the point, suffers no contradiction. The negative argument of silence on the part of enemies, as well as the positive one of the testimony of friends, corroborates the resurrection of Jesus. We also remark that *God* is said to have raised up his Son ; he did not rise of his own power or will from the sleep of the tomb. The resurrection was a miracle wrought by the Almighty, not by Christ. See notes on John x. 16–18. — *Having loosed the pains of death.* Or, more properly translated, “the bonds of death.” Jesus is represented as bound in the prison-house of death, until God interposed and freed him on the third day. — *Because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.* The impossibility here spoken of did not consist in any natural obstacle, but in the fact that “it was unfit in itself, and contrary to the tenor of prophecy,” that the Messiah should “see

corruption” in the grave. No tomb was strong enough to hold his body, when the voice of God called him forth to life. He arose triumphant, and “abolished death.” — *For David.* In Ps. xvi. 8–11. David was regarded by the Jews as the type of the Messiah. The quotation, as usual in the New Testament, is made from the Septuagint Greek version, not from the Hebrew original. — *I foresaw the Lord, &c.* Noyes, in his admirable version of the Psalms, has thus translated this passage : —

“ I set the Lord before me at all times ;  
Since he is at my right hand, I shall not fall.  
Therefore my heart is glad, and my spirit  
rejoiceth ;  
My flesh also dwelleth in security.  
For thou wilt not give me up to the grave ;  
Nor wilt thou suffer thy holy one to see the  
pit.  
Thou wilt show me the path of life ;  
In thy presence is fulness of joy.”

— *Thou will not leave my soul in hell.* The word “hell” is derived from the Anglo-Saxon *hel-an*, to cover ; a place *covered*. Bishop Horsley remarks that “The English word ‘hell,’ in its primary and natural meaning, signifies nothing more than ‘the unseen and covered place,’ and is properly used, both in the Old and New Testament, to render the Hebrew word in the one, and the Greek word in the other, which denote the invisible mansion of disembodied souls, without any reference to suf-

29 *Men and brethren*, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins,

ferings." This might have been true of the primitive usage of the word, but "hell" now means, in English, a place of torment, supposed to be the abode of the wicked after death; and whenever therefore *hades*, the Greek word in the present text, is rendered "hell," it conveys the idea, not of the vast subterranean mansion of the departed good or bad, as it ought to do according to Jewish belief, but that of an abode, according to the popular theology, of superlative woe. The word *hades* occurs eleven times in the New Testament; Mat. xi. 23, xvi. 18; Luke x. 15, xvi. 23; Acts ii. 27, 31; 1 Cor. xv. 55; Rev. i. 18, vi. 8, xx. 13, 14; and in every instance but one, that of 1 Cor. xv. 55, it is rendered "hell," when the proper translation would have been either "death," the "grave," as in 1 Cor. xv. 55, or the "abode of the dead," as might suit the connexion. Another word, which is translated "hell" in our version of the New Testament, is *gehenna*, which is of Hebrew origin, signifying "the valley of Hinnom," a valley near Jerusalem, where the offal and refuse of the city were cast, and fires were constantly kept to consume them, and worms were always preying upon the decayed matter. See note on Mat. v. 22. This term is used eleven times by our Lord, and once by James, and signifies "punishment," or "a place of punishment." The only other word which is rendered "hell" in the New Testament, is *Tartarus*. It is used once in 2 Peter ii. 4. It is a Greek word, taken from the ancient mythology, and signifies the "abyss," or abode of the Titans, or place

where Ixion, Sisyphus, and others, were fabled to be punished.—*To see corruption.* Which means to suffer decay, to experience decomposition. Acts xiii. 35.

29. *Men and brethren.* Hebrew for "brethren." To call their attention to something important which he was about to utter, he uses this address; as we naturally call a person by name in conversation, whose ear we wish to gain to what we are about to say.—*The patriarch David.* Acts xiii. 36; 1 Kings ii. 10. This title was applied to David because he was the venerable ancestor of the royal line, which for so many years sat on the Jewish throne, and from which the Messiah originated. It is likewise used in connexion with the names of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the progenitors of the Israelites. Acts vii. 8, 9; Heb. vii. 4. The heads of the families, or the chief men of the tribes, were also thus designated. 2 Chron. xix. 8.—*His sepulchre is with us unto this day.* The sepulchre of the kings was on Mount Zion. David, as we are informed by Josephus, was buried with great pomp and splendor by his son Solomon, and an immense sum of money deposited in the tomb; for he states that, 1300 years afterwards, when Hyrcanus was besieged by Antiochus, he took out 3000 talents to induce the enemy by money to raise the siege; and Herod also subsequently rifled the tomb of a large amount of treasure.

30-32. It has long been a controverted point among interpreters, how the apostle should be understood in thus quoting and applying this Psalm of David to the Messiah.

according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, 31

The same difficulty also arises in relation to the use made of it by Paul in Acts xiii. 34-36. The general method is to consider David as uttering in Ps. xvi. a literal prophecy of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which Peter quotes as conclusive proof that Jesus was the Messiah, since he had been raised up by God from the dead, and thus fulfilled the words of the inspired prophet. But against this view there lies the great objection, that the Psalm bears not the least apparent trace of a prophetic character, regarding the distant coming Messiah. As observed by Noyes, and as appears from the version by him, before quoted, "The person who is the subject of this Psalm expresses his entire dependence upon God, his gratitude for divine goodness, his satisfaction with the condition assigned him, and his firm hopes of future protection and favor." It would even seem to be doubtful, according to the above translation, whether the author originally had any reference to any thing except the present life.

Again, to quote further the same author, "Some Christians who believe the apostles to be inspired as teachers of the Christian system, rather than as reasoners and interpreters, suppose David, or the author of the Psalm, to be the only person described in it." So that Peter and Paul are regarded by this class of interpreters, as having made this mistake as to one class of the evidences of Christianity, or one of the proofs of the resurrection of Christ; viz. that they quoted as a prophecy what was not so in reality, and had no reference to the Messiah. If this should appear to be the fact, the great difficulty is the liability of the apostles, after their spiritual illumin-

nation, to err in so important a point as the proofs of the truth and divinity of the Christian religion; though that might perhaps be parried; by referring to the traces of imperfection or doubt in relation to other and equally important affairs and duties. See Acts xv. 6, 39; Gal. ii. 11-14.

There is still another mode of explanation, which has its difficulties, but which is perhaps less embarrassed than the preceding ones. It supposes that Peter quotes rather by way of rhetorical illustration, than of theological argument; that he uses a mode of reasoning adapted to the Jewish audience which he was addressing, as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews pursues a course of argumentation best suited to Hebrew prepossessions; that the words David uses could not have been literally applicable to him, for he died and was buried, and saw corruption; but that in a more sublime sense they are to be understood of the Messiah, that he would arise from the dead. It is true that, in ver. 25, it is said that "David speaketh concerning *him*," i. e. Christ; but such expressions are in some measure free and popular, not literal; for, as Kui-noel observes, the formula, "to speak concerning any one," is often employed to denote, not that the words were peculiarly spoken of the individual, but that they might be accommodated to his case. See Eph. v. 32, where the apostle says, "I speak concerning Christ and the church," meaning that he had introduced a figurative illustration from the relation of a man to his wife, which was appropriate to the case of Christ and the church. The meaning would be, then, that what David had said of himself was capable of being used, in a more sublime sense,

that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are wit-

with reference to the resurrection of the Messiah. Newcome says that "This prophecy, in its most eminent sense, applied to Jesus Christ; although it had an inferior sense, also, viz. that David should be preserved from death, notwithstanding the malice and power of his enemies." The case of Caiaphas, see notes on John. xi. 49-52, is in point here to some extent. He did not predict, as a prophet, the death of Jesus, but he said what might afterwards be regarded in the light of prophecy, and thus applied. Still this method is burdened with the objections of being rather obscure, of holding to the theory of two senses, of not assigning a clear and definite meaning to the apostle's words, and of supposing that he used arguments to convince the Jews that did not have weight with his own mind,—a device better suited to a Grecian sophist than a Christian apostle.

There is also another interpretation of the following kind: David is understood, in the Psalm, to rejoice that his seed should not be extinct; that though he died, yet the line should be continued; for the Messiah had been promised, and that was a guaranty that the family would be perpetuated. The Jews considered it a great misfortune to die childless, and have one's family cease at death. But, on the other hand, to view one's posterity extending on in unbroken succession, was a matter of great rejoicing. For example, recur to these texts: Deut. xvii. 20; Ps. xxxvii. 28. It was in such a frame of mind that the Psalm was composed. Peabody remarks, in his *Essay on Prophecy*, that "David acknowledges the promise of that glorious descendant from himself, in whom his name would be perpetuated

ed, so that he should, after death, enjoy, as it were, a posthumous and perpetual life. When he says, 'Thou wilt not suffer thy holy one to see corruption,' he means the same that Horace does when he says, '*Non omnis moriar* ;' 'I shall not wholly die, I shall revive and live in the glory of that Messiah who shall make my name an universally honored name, my kingdom a perpetually glorious kingdom.' The apostle simply quotes the Psalm to show that it had been fulfilled, that David's line had descended unbroken, and appeared in the person of Jesus, whom God had raised up to be both Lord and Christ, and crowned the proof of his authority by his resurrection and ascension. The difficulty of this view is, that it makes what is said about God "raising him up," ver. 24, 31, 32, and his "resurrection," as is usually understood, from the dead, to refer back to his original advent into the world, and his being brought into being at first by God, which is somewhat hard. But this view, on the whole, is encumbered with as few difficulties, perhaps, as any that can be proposed. It derives considerable support from the 30th verse, in particular; for it there seems to be stated that the "raising up," spoken of, was not simply from the grave, but originally upon Christ's first advent into the world. See, also, Acts iii. 22, 26, v. 30, xiii. 23.

Peabody thus paraphrases ver. 30, 31: "Being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that, of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, said, concerning the raising up of Christ, (to sit on his throne,) that his own (David's) soul

nesses.' Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens, but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy

was not left in Hades, neither did his own (David's) flesh see corruption." — *That of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne.* Griesbach sets aside from the text, as spurious, the expression, "according to the flesh he would raise up Christ," and would leave it to read thus: "that of the fruit of his loins one should sit on his throne." — *Christ.* Should be "the Christ," or "Messiah." — *That his soul was not left.* The same distinguished German critic also leaves out the words "his soul," as spurious, and the sentence reads thus: "that he was not left." In both cases, the best versions and manuscripts do not contain the expressions which are found in the received text. — *Raised up.* This would appear to refer to his ascension, from the "therefore" of the next verse. — *Whereof we all are witnesses.* It was not only important to assert that Jesus had been raised up by God, but also to adduce testimony to the same end. The apostle, therefore, with his associates, stands boldly forward, and, in the presence of the Jewish people, declares that they were witnesses of these things. The argument from miracle and prophecy was corroborated by living testimony.

33. Acts v. 31; Phil. ii. 9. *Being by the right hand of God exalted.* This expression, properly rendered, is, *Being exalted at, and not by, the right hand of God.* See, also, ver. 34, and Acts v. 31. This is the usual Hebrew figure to express high exaltation and favor with God. — *Having received of the Father the promise, &c.*

John xiv. 16, 26, xv. 26, xvi. 7, 13-15. Winer remarks that the phrase, "to receive the promise of the Spirit," relates to what takes place when the promised good itself is received, or when the promise is fulfilled. — *He hath shed forth this, &c.* Agreeably to his promise and prediction, now that he himself is taken away, a Holy Spirit is sent in his place; and, as it is bestowed by his request, and in accordance with the assurances he had given, it is said to be shed forth by him. Kuinoel says, "The meaning is, 'We owe to Christ those gifts with which we have been endowed, those operations of the divine power in which we rejoice.'" Where is the propriety, then, of speaking of the personality of the Holy Spirit, when it is thus described as an influence shed forth, not of its own volition, but by Christ, or at his request, and in fulfilment of the promise of the Father? — *See and hear.* He appeals to the evidence of their own senses. They had seen multitudes drawn together by wonder. They had heard the apostles and disciples using the gift of tongues, and speaking in many foreign languages. Would they not, at least, believe their own senses?

34, 35. *David is not ascended into the heavens.* The object of the apostle, here, was not to represent what was the state of the dead, but to assert that the language of the Psalm he quotes could not be applied literally to David, for he had not visibly ascended, like Jesus, to the power and glory of God, though he might be living in a conscious spiritual state after death. — *The Lord said*

36 foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

37 Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and

*unto my Lord.* Ps. cx. 1. Though the same word is used in Greek for "Lord" in both instances, yet, in the original Hebrew, it is, "Jehovah said unto my Lord," or *Adoni*, a title of high honor and respect, and one form of which is sometimes used by the Jews, instead of the word *Jehovah*, which they feared to utter commonly. The expression is used by Peter, however it may have been originally employed, to describe the superiority which God gave his Son over his enemies, by raising him up on high, and placing him at his right hand.

— *Thy foes thy footstool.* It was sometimes the custom for conquerors, in ancient times, to put their foot on the neck of the vanquished, in token of their victory and power over them. The triumph of Christ, his exaltation on high, the spreading power and influence of his name and gospel in the world, should be matter of joy to all his followers; and should encourage them, that, if they likewise persevere, they shall in no wise fail of the crown of life. "If we be dead with Christ, we shall live with him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with him." How glorious a prospect! how divine a reward!

36. In this verse, the apostle draws the foregoing reasoning to a conclusion, establishing the point that Jesus, whom they had so ignominiously and cruelly treated, was indeed Lord and Christ, or Messiah; that God had exalted him on high at his own right hand, and that further opposition to him would only recoil upon his enemies in their ruin. — *The house of Israel.* The family or nation of Israel. — *Know assuredly.*

Strong and undeniable affirmation. — *God hath made.* Calvin remarks on this phrase, "Peter says *made*, because God the Father conferred this honor on Jesus." — *Whom ye have crucified.* This renders the contrast the more vivid. The being whom the Jews had gone so far as even to crucify, was the very one whom God had exalted to be Lord and Messiah. — *Both Lord and Christ.* Not Supreme Lord of all things, but Lord in that subsidiary sense in which it is used in ver. 34: "The Supreme Lord, Jehovah, said to my Lord." From ver. 22 to 31, he argued that Jesus is the Christ, or the Messiah, the Anointed, and in ver. 34, that he is "Lord," or high in authority. Without the set formality of logic, or the strict arrangement of a discourse, the speeches of the apostles are urgent to the point; and, while they leave out no important consideration, they are compact and brief, and bear testimony that they are the overflowings of minds filled with a heavenly wisdom.

37. *Now when they heard this.* That they had crucified their Lord and Messiah, the great desire and hope of their nation. — *They were pricked in their heart.* They were cut or stung to the heart; or, as the German of Luther has it, "When they heard it, it went through their heart." The apostle had, by his very serious and home-put discourse, brought them to a sense of their guilt and danger. They saw the wickedness of their conduct in delivering up their Messiah to be crucified by the hands of the Romans. They felt alarmed. They were

brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Re- 38 pent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of

smitten, not only with strong compunction of conscience, but they trembled at those judgments which threatened them in the “great and notable day of the Lord.” The effects here described flowed naturally from the speech of the apostle, which set before the Jews so plainly their personal accountableness and unfaithfulness. They had heard Jesus; they had witnessed his miracles; ver. 22; they had been invited to become his disciples; but they had turned a deaf ear, hardened their hearts, and employed the wicked hands of “the uncircumcised” to put him to the death of a slave and a malefactor. Well might their hearts be cut to the quick, when they were once led to feel, that the being they had thus treated, was no less than the Messiah himself, the great deliverer, the hope of two thousand years, the Lord of glory.—*What shall we do?* Acts ix. 6, xvi. 30. Their question showed symptoms of moral soundness yet remaining. They did not, like Judas, indulge in that “sorrow of the world” which “worketh death,” but turn with earnest entreaty to their spiritual advisers for guidance. They ask a most significant question. They wish to be directed in the right way, and show already their full confidence in those who a little before, ver. 13, were the objects of the most scandalous charges. It is the sign of returning moral health, when the corrupt and impenitent inquire, What shall we do?

38. *Repent.* The word of the original has the primitive sense “to perceive afterwards,” “to have an interview or thought;” and hence the secondary meaning, “to repent.” But the Roman Catholic translation, “do

penance,” is wholly unauthorized; for, when repentance is accompanied with external signs of sorrow or penance, it is so stated, as in Mat. xi. 21. Besides, the “penance” enjoined by the Catholics is artificial and unscriptural, and consistent with continued wickedness. But the repentance required by Christ and his apostles was first the proper sorrow for the past, and then reformation of moral conduct for the future, not the mere badges of penitent emotion. So that the translation of Coverdale is not so much out of the way, “amende yourselves;” though this rather describes the fruit of repentance than repentance, as an incipient state of the regenerated mind. Said Matthew Henry, “*Repent*; that is a plank after shipwreck.” Said Luther, “Where there is pardon of sins, there is life and holiness.”—*Be baptized every one of you.* He enjoins, as the next step after their repentance, universal baptism into the Christian faith. Acts xx. 21. If baptism was enjoined by Christ, Mat. xxviii. 19, Mark xvi. 16, and universally observed by the apostles and early preachers of the gospel, why is it not now a valid and essential ordinance and means of grace? The public profession of Christianity is as necessary now as it ever was.—*In the name of Jesus Christ.* This shows that the particular formula, given in Mat. xxviii. 19, had no special efficacy, apart from the ideas which it was intended and used to convey; and those ideas were essentially summed up in the form, “in the name of Jesus Christ,” for the profession of his name implies belief in the Father and in the influence of his Holy Spirit. He exhorts the Jews to abandon their old preju-

39 the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our 40 God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

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dices, to confess Jesus to be their Messiah by the act of baptism, and thus to become receivers of pardon and the Holy Spirit.— *For the remission of sins.* Or, as Clarke reads, “in reference to the remission or removal of sins.” As observed by Olshausen, this was the negative side, the entire clearing away of the Old. Baptism was to be the *sign*; and the things signified were the cleansing from sin, and new spiritual endowments.— *The gift of the Holy Ghost*, or Holy Spirit. This, according to the foregoing author, is the positive side, the communication of the Spirit, the necessary antecedent to the establishment of the New. Many Trinitarian writers interpret the “Holy Spirit” impersonally. Barnes remarks that “The gift of the Holy Ghost here does not mean his *extraordinary gifts*, or the power of working miracles.” So many others. But that what is signified is, according to Kuinoel, the effects of divine power, a full and accurate knowledge of divine things, a spirit-ed and perpetual pursuit of holiness, a burning zeal to profess and propagate the doctrine of Christ. John iii. 5; Gal. iii. 3, 14, v. 22, 23. There is no evidence, that all of that vast multitude were promised by Peter, or did receive, the gift of working miracles, speaking with tongues, and exercising other supernatural powers; on the contrary, the natural inference is the other way, as the voice of commentators has generally decided.

39. *The promise*, i. e. of the aid and influence of the Spirit, which would be given to all that sought it in the appointed way.— *To you*. Al-

though they were involved in the blood of the innocent and the Anointed One, the door of mercy was still standing open, and the hand of pardon and promise was stretched out.— *To your children.* The blessing would not cease with that generation; it would be transmitted to their posterity, without limit.— *To all that are afar off.* John x. 16; Eph. ii. 17, iii. 6. Wakefield renders it, “all your furthermost posterity;” but that idea has already been essentially conveyed in the preceding clause, and is unnecessary here. Some understand it of the distant Jews living in Gentile countries; but it is more applicable to the Gentiles themselves; for though Peter was not yet illuminated entirely on this point, as the history shows in Acts x. 28, 34, still the common opinion of the Jews, in which the apostle no doubt shared, attributed to the Gentiles great benefits from the coming of the Messiah. They would, it was supposed, become members of his kingdom by being proselytes to the Jewish faith.— *The Lord our God shall call*, i. e. as many as, in the providence of God, should be favored with the preaching of the gospel. The promise was free to all.

40. *Many other words.* The historian professes to give only the most important outlines of the address, and frankly tells us that he has not recorded the whole. Many classic authors framed speeches of their own, and put them in the mouths of their principal characters, as if they were actually their words. But the addresses of the apostles and disciples in the Acts are the true, though abbreviated, report of what was really

Then they that gladly received his word, were baptized: and 41 the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand

said, and bear countless internal marks of their genuineness, which no invention of man could have devised. — *Testify.* Stronger, “earnestly testify,” or “solemnly admonish.” — *Save yourselves.* However much God performs of the work, there is always much left to the fidelity and industry of man; and every precept in the Bible is a virtual announcement of man’s free agency and moral responsibility. — *Untoward.* The Greek primarily means “crooked,” and secondarily “perverse,” “depraved.” Deut. xxxii. 5. Terrible calamities were hanging over the Jewish people on account of their wickedness; that generation would not pass away before ruin would fall upon city, temple, and nation. As a security against impending temporal judgments, Luke xxi. 18, much more on account of the claims of truth — a higher motive — and on account of the retributions of futurity, ought they to embrace the Christian faith. They ought to come out and separate themselves from a generation upon which could be charged hypocrisy and corruption, and the gigantic sin of disowning the Son of God and putting him to death.

41. *Gladly.* This word is retained in the text by Griesbach, but it is marked by him as probably spurious, because it is wanting in several of the best ancient authorities. — *Were baptized.* This was the rite of initiation into the Christian church, and we see it immediately complied with, as our Lord had commanded. Mat. xxviii. 19. As to the mode, the facts that the number of persons was so large to be baptized in one day, and the day already far advanced, ver. 15, that the number to perform the ceremony was so small, that there

were but few collections of water of any amount in the city or neighborhood of Jerusalem, and that the pools and other places were under the control of hostile Jews, tend to the belief that the ceremony was performed by sprinkling or affusion, rather than by total immersion of the body. But, even were it proved to a demonstration — which it never can be — that the whole three thousand were immersed, it no more follows necessarily that sprinkling or affusion is not genuine or sufficient baptism, than that the Lord’s supper is ineffectual because it is administered in the daytime instead of the evening; or because it is in a lower, instead of an upper, room; or because the disciples receive the elements sitting in their pews, and not reclining around a common table. It is not the manner in which a ceremony is performed that is essential — always providing it is a decent manner — to constitute its validity, but the spirit and motives of the actors. The *sign* never for a moment should be permitted to compete, in value or importance, with the thing *signified*. Baptism is efficacious as a sign, a means, and its virtue depends upon the disposition of him who performs and him who receives it; not upon the particular mode of its performance; though one mode, as that of sprinkling, may be more convenient, safe, and becoming, than another, and therefore to be chosen. — *Three thousand souls.* Or, persons. The custom of drawing inferences from the day of Pentecost to modern revivals, is wholly out of place. The cases are widely dissimilar. To speak of “a Pentecostal effusion of the Spirit,” is a mere figure of speech. The day of miracles is no more. We are to look now for the ordinary, but not

42 souls. — And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs 44 were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, 45 and had all things common; and sold their possessions and

the extraordinary, gifts of the Spirit upon the speaker. The preacher is not now a Peter, with an apostolic tongue of fire and authority, but a man with only his natural resources, so far as inspiration is concerned. An audience is not prepared now, as was the audience then, by a long course of events, to receive a strong and decided impression in relation to the simple matter of fact of Jesus being the Messiah. The solemn scenes of the Pentecost, therefore, furnish no justification or encouragement to the disorders and unhealthy excitements of modern revivals; and in the beautiful picture which is here presented of the church, after this occasion, contrasted with the schisms and backslidings of churches at the present day, after what is called a revival, we behold the difference between the work of God and the violent and unnatural work of men, and of unwise men.

42, 43. *Continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine.* Which means that they devoted themselves constantly to the instructions of the apostles. The idea is, not their pertinacity in adhering to the doctrines of the apostles, but their constancy in attending upon their teachings.—

*Fellowship.* Society, or social sympathy. Phil. ii. 1.—*Breaking of bread.* Whether this refers to the Lord's supper, to what were called their *agapæ*, or love-feasts, or to their common social entertainments, is an unsettled question among critics, and cannot, perhaps, now be determined with certainty.—*To break bread*, is a Jewish phrase, meaning to *make a meal*, according to Pearce; and these

were probably occasions of social entertainment, connected with religious services, as the commemoration of the love of Christ and prayer. The breaking of bread is frequently, though not always, associated with the Lord's supper in the New Testament, and therefore naturally awakens the idea that something of the kind is meant here. It has been supposed that the Lord's supper was observed once a week by the early Christians. See Mat. xxvi. 26; Luke xxiv. 30; Acts ii. 46, xx. 7; 1 Cor. xi. 24.—*And fear came upon every soul.* A reverential awe generally settled upon the minds of the people. The cause is mentioned in the next line. The miracles wrought by the apostles produced this effect. A sketch of several of the wonders and signs performed by them, is given in the succeeding chapters. The picture here presented of the early church is beautiful and life-like. The features delineated are such as we should naturally expect from what goes before — love, sympathy, fortitude, high trust in God, and affectionate remembrance of Christ — while a universal awe broods over the people at witnessing the wonderful works of the apostles, who profess to perform them in the name of a crucified, but conquering, Messiah, soon to come and inflict fearful retribution upon his enemies.

44, 45. *Believed*, i. e. were disciples; for none could become such without the principle of faith.—*Were together.* This, probably, refers, not to meeting in the same place, but to the union which prevailed in the Christian body. They harmonized.

goods, and parted them to all *men*, as every man had need. And 46 they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness

As yet there was no schism. — *Had all things common.* This is a general, not a universal, term, as will appear in the following remarks. They were so knit together by the ties of faith and sympathy, that the distinctions of property were in a manner forgotten. They lived a higher life, and breathed a less earthly and selfish spirit. — *Sold their possessions*, i. e. their *real* estate, or houses and lands, for so the original implies. The natural love of property was diminished by the prospect of great changes and the coming of the great day of the Lord, as well as by the more enlarged and benevolent sentiments of Christianity. They sold their property to share it with their poorer brethren, who were liable, after their profession of the gospel, to lose the assistance of their former friends and patrons. — *Goods.* By which is meant their movable or *personal* property. — *Parted them to all men, as every man had need.* Acts vi. 1. Many writers have found in this passage the history of a community of goods among the early Christians; but the more general and reasonable opinion now is, that no such state of things, rigidly speaking, is here described. Because, (1.) The terms of the narrative do not authorize so universal an inference, but are rather intended to represent the liberality and benevolence of the disciples; (2.) The history afterwards speaks of the community of property as voluntary, not necessary — as a gift, not a duty; Acts iv. 32, v. 4; (3.) Mary, the mother of Mark the Evangelist, is represented, in Acts xii. 12, as the owner of a house in Jerusalem; (4.) The distinction observed in speaking of the rich and the poor, Gal. ii. 10; James ii. 2, 5, 6,

v. 1; the contributions and alms for the needy, and even for the poor at Jerusalem, where this community of goods existed, Acts ix. 36, xi. 29; 1 Cor. xvi. 1; 2 Cor. ix. 1—5, and the apostolic precepts to hospitality and benevolence, Rom. xii. 13; 2 Thes. iii. 12; James ii. 15, 16, show conclusively that all property was not literally merged in a common stock, but that the arrangement spoken of in the text was a device of benevolence for the necessities of the time being, not a perpetual or general institution. There was nothing like the intercommunity of goods among the Essenes and Therapeuta, of ancient, and the monks, Shakers, and other associated bodies, of modern times. As has been said, the object was not “to destroy property, but selfishness,” and to promote the comfort of the poor in their change of faith. The apostles showed their more than human wisdom, in not incorporating with the new religion any thing inconsistent with its universality and adaptation to all ages, races, and governments.

46. We have, in this and the following verse, a continued picture of the beauty and spiritual vitality of the early church. What author of fact or fiction has presented a more interesting history of a happy community than the Christian evangelist — a community to which every man, in his right senses, would more desire to join himself — or in which all the elements of love, and peace, and progress, are more thoroughly combined? Cannot society, nations, mankind, be brought, finally, to fulfil the exquisite promise of this long-departed age, and restore, as it were, the old painting to the reality of new life? The highest form of Christian

47 and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

civilization is yet to appear, but the dawn has broken from the east. — *Continuing daily with one accord in the temple.* They probably attended the worship in the temple at the usual hours of prayer, of nine in the morning and three in the afternoon. Acts iii. 1. They had not yet shaken themselves free of the Jewish yoke, and they rightly retained some fealty to the old faith in their adoption of, and assimilation with, the new one; as naturalists tell us that the old leaf does not fall to the ground, until the new bud begins to swell underneath it. — *Breaking bread from house to house.* Or, “at home,” in contradistinction to their exercises in the temple. The same occasions are referred to here as in ver. 42. The character of the repast was that of a social entertainment, united with a religious commemoration. Acts xx. 7. It is said that the *agape*, or love-feasts, arose from the necessity of providing for the poor, who had formerly lived on the sacrifices; but who, after their conversion, were cut off by their faith from this source of support. — *Their meat.* Old English for “food,” whether animal or vegetable. — *With gladness.* Some discern, in this phrase, the joy of the poor for the bounty so generously afforded. — *Singleness of heart.* And in these words is seen the simplicity and freedom from pride and ostentation of the rich in their benevolence. But the expressions are general, rather than limited to classes, and describe at once the purity of motive, and the elastic spirit of joy, pervading the new association. We have here a description of the influence which true religion, truly received and obeyed, has upon its subjects.

47. *Praising God.* They recognized the great source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual, in God. Christian piety does not suffer us to dwell chiefly upon secondary causes, but prompts us to rise to the First Great Cause. — *Having favor with all the people.* 2 Tim. iii. 12. It is not said that they had favor with the priests, Pharisees, and Sadducees; on the contrary, they soon suffered persecution from that quarter. See Acts iv. 1, and elsewhere. But their virtues were such as to conciliate the favor of all unprejudiced witnesses. The common people heard our Lord himself gladly, though, in their fickleness, they could afterwards shout his crucifixion. Because a man is persecuted, it does not necessarily follow that he is a good man; and because a man is not persecuted, it is to be inferred no more certainly that he is a bad man.

— *Such as should be saved.* Ver. 40. Thomson renders it, “them who were cured,” referring to those restored by the miraculous power of the apostles. Symonds renders it, “Christian converts,” or “converts to Christianity;” Bloomfield, “the saved;” which is to be preferred, as the original is a participle, and simply describes those who were put in the way of salvation, without pronouncing any decision, as our version does, respecting the final issue of their course in another world. This participle occurs in four other places in the New Testament, and is rendered rightly “be” or “are saved.” See the reference below. The simple sense is, that the Lord added to the church daily those who had laid aside their old Jewish faith, and become the professed disciples of Christ by faith and baptism, and thus were saved

## CHAPTER III.

*The Cure of the Lame Man, and the Address of Peter.*

NOW Peter and John went up together into the temple, at the

already, were put in a saving way, and would, if they persevered faithfully, be finally saved. Luke xiii. 23, xix. 9; Rom. xi. 11; 1 Cor. i. 18, xv. 2; 2 Cor. ii. 15; Titus iii. 5; Rev. xxi. 24. The term "church," in this connexion, means the assembly, the body of professed believers, who had been baptized, as stated in ver. 41.

There are two aspects, in which it is desirable to study this history of the early church; one, that of their **BELIEF**, which, as we learn from the speeches of the apostles and the whole tenor of the narrative, was simple and fundamental, and embraced but few of those points now raised to the highest pitch of importance by more than half of Christendom; the other, is that of their **CONDUCT**, which was eminently pure, benevolent, devout, and heavenly-minded, worthy of the apostolic age, and worthy to shed its beautiful light over the whole world. Let us imitate the simplicity of their faith, and aspire after the purity of their life.

## CHAPTER III.

The historian stated, in ver. 43 of the last chapter, that "many signs and wonders" were done by the apostles, and he now proceeds to specify an instance which was remarkable in itself, and which led to an important discourse by Peter.

1. *Went up together.* Were going up together. The apostles and disciples of Jesus rarely went forth single-handed, but two by two they labored and preached, and thus enjoyed the immense support and aid of fraternal sympathy in their dangers and sufferings. — *Into the temple.* Luke xxiv. 53; Acts ii. 46. This was still the house of God to them.

They were in a state of transition from the old to the new religion, and it was a sign of a healthy spiritual sensibility, to change gradually from the one to the other. They could still worship in the temple with a clear conscience, as their Master had done before them; for outward institutions had not yet been established and perfected to express and cultivate Christian veneration. — *The hour of prayer, being the ninth hour.* The hours of prayer and the hours of sacrifice are said, by Lightfoot, to have been the same in the Hebrew code. We learn, from the example of David, Daniel, and Peter, as well as from the authority of the Talmuds, that the Jews had three hours of prayer daily,— the third hour, at nine o'clock, A. M.; the sixth hour, at noon; the ninth hour— our present case— at three o'clock, P. M. Ps. lv. 17; Dan. vi. 10, 13; Acts ii. 15, x. 9. The Jewish computation of time is worthy of note. The day was divided into twelve hours, whatever was the season of the year. John xi. 9. An hour, therefore, was not uniformly of the same length, and the third or the ninth hour would not fall on the same point, according to our reckoning, at all periods of the year. This method was introduced from Babylon after the captivity: it still prevails in the East. To reduce Jewish time to ours, it is therefore necessary to observe when the sun rises, and from that starting-point ascertain what would be the succeeding hours agreeably to our reckoning. The correspondence of the Jewish third, sixth, and ninth hour with our nine, twelve, and three o'clock, is therefore strictly exact only at the time of the equinox.

2 hour of prayer, *being* the ninth *hour*. And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them

2. The cure of the lame man probably took place not long after the events related in the foregoing chapter, and, as many believe, during the feast of Pentecost, when large multitudes were still together, Acts iv. 4, from all parts of the world.—*Lame, &c.* Acts iv. 22, xiv. 8. The particularity with which the writer relates events, and multiplies places, dates, and circumstances, adds not only interest, but credibility, to the narrative, for it bespeaks the honest historian and the observing witness. The fact that this man had been a cripple from his birth, during forty years, and that he was accustomed to be placed daily at the gate of the temple to ask alms, rendered his case more difficult of cure, and his cure more conspicuous.—*Was carried.* Was in the act of being carried. He was unable to help himself. His condition was truly pitiable. Imagine his poor, desolate, and hopeless lot; and the joyful rebound of his feelings in ver. 8, 9, will seem true to nature. The state of the sick, lame, blind, insane, deaf and dumb, in lands unenlightened by the gospel, is heart-rending to contemplate. The good fruits of Christ's doctrine of love to God and love to man are seen in the asylums and hospitals of relief and charity, springing up in Christendom more and more from age to age. It has been said that heathenism could adduce but one hospital, and that that was established to keep and relieve sick and aged animals, as horses and cows! while man was left uncared for. What a striking contrast between the practical effects of the two systems, even upon man's present welfare!—*Whom they laid daily.* It was his daily resort, and conse-

quently he was well known. It was customary in the East, both in Jewish and heathen countries, to place the poor and diseased at the entrances of the sacred places to solicit charity, as well as by the wayside, and at the doors of the rich. Mark x. 46; Luke xvi. 20. Those who went to pay their devotions, were also called to prove their benevolence. The same custom has prevailed in Christian temples. The modern efforts for the prevention of pauperism, the suppression of street beggary, and the establishment of ministers at large, so that the poor may be spiritually, as well as physically, blest, and helped so as to awaken the desire and the power to help themselves, are rich and heavenly manifestations of a higher state of civilization, of a deeper sympathy with him who went about doing good, and of the practicability of applying his religion to cure the worst evils of humanity.—*The gate of the temple, which is called Beautiful.* There is some debate respecting the location of this gate; but it was probably the one called the Tenth, situated on the east, entering into the court of the women, made by Herod the Great, of Corinthian brass, of the most skilful workmanship, and ornamented in the most beautiful manner. The whole was 87½ feet in height, and the doors 70 feet. The term *Susan*, or *Shushan*, (lily,) was also given to it by the Rabbins, perhaps from the peculiar style of the decorations. 1 Kings vii. 19. Josephus writes that, “Of the gates, nine of them were every where overlaid with gold and silver; likewise the posts and the lintels. But one, without the temple, made of Corinthian brass, did much ex-

that entered into the temple; who, seeing *etc.* and John about 3 to go into the temple, asked an alms. And Peter fastening his 4 eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed 5 unto them, expecting to receive something of them. Then Peter 6 said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee:

ceed in glory those that were overlaid with gold and silver." At this gate began "the inner temple," as distinguished by Josephus from "the outer temple." — *To ask alms, &c.* As this was the most frequented gate of the temple, and in the vicinity of Solomon's porch, ver. 11, John x. 23, he was placed here as the most eligible position for begging of the passing crowd.

3-5. *Seeing Peter and John.* He did not distinguish them from other worshippers. — *Fastening his eyes.* This is expressed by one participle in Greek, derived from a verb, used by Luke no less than twelve times in his Gospel and the Acts, but occurring nowhere else in the New Testament, except twice in Paul's Epistles. The style of different sacred writers is identified by an observation of such slight peculiarities. — *Look on us.* They wished to arrest his notice, and prepare his mind for what was to follow; that his interest might be awakened, and that he might understand the cause of his cure, and refer it to its true source. ATTENTION is the first condition of spiritual good. — *Expecting to receive something,* i. e. of a pecuniary nature, as appears from the words of Peter in the next verse. The graphic description of this scene, between the apostles and the lame man, annihilates every pretence of a fabricated story.

6. *Silver and gold.* 2 Cor. vi. 10. A circumlocution, or indirect phrase, to signify money or riches. It is related by Clarke, that Thomas Aquinas, surnamed "the Angelical Doc-

tor," who was highly esteemed by Pope Innocent IV., going one day into the pope's chamber, where they were reckoning large sums of money, the pope, addressing himself to Aquinas, said, "You see that the church is no longer in an age in which she can say, 'Silver and gold have I none.' " It is true, holy father," replied the Angelical Doctor; "nor can she now say to the lame man, 'Rise up and walk.' " — *Such as I have.* The miraculous gift intrusted to my care and exercise. — *In the name of Jesus Christ.* The apostles worked their miracles in the name or authority of their Lord, as their object was to lead men to believe in him, as the Son of God, and the long-expected Messiah. Mark xvi. 17. — *Of Nazareth.* They hesitated not to avow the obscurity of his origin, and to challenge with boldness the faith of their countrymen in one who bore this despised name. — *Rise up and walk.* I say, Rise up and walk. The command is to be introduced by some such phrase understood. We cannot but notice, in this verse, the change which has come over the apostles. They had been ambitious of power, and wealth, and distinction. They had contended with one another, who should be the greatest. They had asked for seats on either hand of their Master in his kingdom. But they now confess their poverty without shame, glory in the name of their rejected Master, and seek no higher renown than doing good, by his authority, to a poor, lame man.

7 in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lift *him* up: and immediately his feet and ankle-bones received strength. And he, leaping up, stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, 9 walking, and leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw 10 him walking and praising God: and they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him.

11 And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called

7-9. *Lift.* Should be “lifted.”—*His feet*, i. e. the lower parts of his feet; as some render it, “the soles.”—*Received strength.* It appears that his lameness arose from a weakness, not from being maimed, or destitute of a limb.—*Leaping up*, i. e. from his bed or couch on which he lay. Is. xxxv. 6. Bloomfield remarks that he leaped, not so much from joy, nor to try whether he could walk, “but, it should seem, at first from ignorance how to walk, by which his essays would be rather *leaping* than walking; just as the imperfect glimmer of the newly-acquired sight of the blind man, Mark viii. 24, made him first ‘see men as trees walking.’ *To leap* well describes the headlong eagerness of the incipient action, as *to stand*, and *to walk*, the other stages of it: ‘he first leaped, then stood still, and (then) walked,’ i. e. in a regular manner.” The perfect cure of so chronic and inveterate a case in an instantaneous manner, sufficiently marks the superhuman character of the act.—*Into the temple, praising God.* He referred his cure to the high source from which it came, and testified his grateful sense of his deliverance by acts of adoration and praise. How appropriate and beautiful that the sick and lame, who have been detained from the courts of the Almighty, should, when able,

enter them, and return thanks that they have received strength and health! Yet how true to the general insensibility of human nature is the narrative given in Luke xvii. 12-19!—*All the people, &c.* They were witnesses of the fact. They knew what the lame man was before, they saw with their own eyes what he was now, and natural emotions of surprise and wonder filled their minds.

10, 11. *They knew that it was he, &c.* There are several particulars which make the cure of the cripple a strong proof of the miraculous power of the apostles, and exclude the possibility of deception. The man had been lame from his birth. He had been known for forty years as an invalid, and been brought daily to his place to beg at one of the most crowded thoroughfares of the temple. He asked not to be cured, but begged money; and there could have been no collusion between him and his benefactors. He was suddenly and entirely restored, so as immediately to stand, leap, and walk, as if he had always enjoyed the exercise of his limbs. The cure was done in a public place, and the people were witnesses of it. They were convinced that it was a miracle. They manifested all the natural signs of astonishment, and, after listening

Solomon's, greatly wondering. And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this ? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk ? The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers hath glorified his Son Jesus ; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go.

to the address of Peter, became converts to the Christian faith in great numbers. Acts iv. 4. It would be credulity of the grossest kind to believe, against all proof or probability, that the apostles, in this case, practised any deception or fraud. It would be to take up the saying of one of old, "It is impossible, therefore I believe." — *Held Peter and John.* Or, clung to them. He could not leave the side of those, who had done him such an unspeakable benefit. He not only praised God, but he expressed his thankfulness to the servants of his benevolence. — *The people ran together.* There was the hurry and running natural to an excited multitude. They rushed together in a crowd where the men were, who had done the wonderful work. — *The porch that is called Solomon's.* The portico. This was not probably built by Solomon, but stood where his portico had done, and upon the same foundation. It was on the east of the temple, and overhung a very deep valley, from which a wall of immense stones had been built up to support it. It afforded a sheltered way in stormy weather ; and, from hints in the New Testament, we infer that it was a much frequented place. John x. 23 ; Acts v. 12.

12. *Answered unto the people.* More correctly, "addressed the people." — *On us.* "Us" is emphatic. He contrasts themselves with "the God of Abraham," &c. The people need not wonder at what is done, as if it was accomplished by any thing

else than divine power, nor look on us, as if we are any more than humble subordinates of the Almighty. Ps. cxv. 1 ; 2 Cor. iv. 5, 7. — *As though by our own power or holiness,* i. e. by any inherent power, or sanctity of character. Lightfoot says that "Such a conceit walked among the nation, that extraordinary holiness might attain to miraculous workings." The miracle was wrought by a transmitted energy from God, of which the apostles were but the channels and conductors. They disclaimed all the honor and glory of such an amazing deed ; and directed attention to its Great Cause, and to the important end for which it was performed. The theory, that miracles are capable of being wrought in proportion as there are faith, and spirituality, and holiness, in the agent, is contrary to the text ; which expressly sets aside all such conditions of personal character as essential to the achievement, and refers all back to the higher Source from which the power had emanated, and which employed now a wavering Moses, and now an impulsive Peter, as its human instrument.

13. *The God of Abraham, &c.* It is not to be overlooked, in this verse, that the apostles do not merely contrast themselves with God, but with the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of their fathers ; thus seizing upon that relation or character in which the Deity stood to them peculiarly, and which was most essential to the purpose in hand.

14 But ye denied the Holy One, and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you ; and killed the Prince of life, whom

He addressed their feeling of country and ancestry. He virtually says, We did not do this great work, but God ; and not only God, but the very God of the patriarchs, the Being in whom you trust and glory. The new religion did not alienate them from the protecting Deity of Israel : on the contrary, it was that God himself who had performed the miracle, through human instrumentalities, to honor his Son. — *Glorified his Son Jesus.* His servant Jesus, according to Robinson, or his minister, or ambassador. He wrought the wonderful cure, and his object was not simply to relieve the lame man, but he had an ulterior purpose, — to glorify his Son Jesus, to substantiate his claims as the Messiah, to make him honored and obeyed by mankind. The miracles were deeds of kindness, but their highest aim was to glorify Jesus, and extend the faith in his divine origin and Messiahship. They were mercies, but also proofs, quickeners, enlighteners. — *Whom ye delivered up, &c.* He compares the glory which God gave his Son, with the indignities which were heaped upon him by the Jews ; who renounced their allegiance to their Messiah, and, not content with that, even procured his death by wicked Gentile hands. — *Pilate, when he was determined, &c.* He completes the climax of their iniquity by showing that they were worse than the heathen judge himself, for he adjudged him innocent, and wished to release him, but was overborne by the clamor of his enemies. They had been guilty of dishonoring and destroying him whom God, the God of their fathers, glorified ; and, still more, they had outraged, by their wickedness, even the moral sense of a Gentile ruler.

14, 15. *The Holy One, and the Just.* Titles elsewhere given to our Lord in Acts iv. 27, 30 ; 1 John ii. 1 ; Rev. iii. 7. His enemies themselves, as well as his friends, joined in pronouncing him innocent and righteous. This was the testimony of Judas, who betrayed, and of Pilate, who condemned, and of Herod, who judged, and of the centurion, who guarded his cross. Mat. xxvii. 4 ; Luke xxiii. 14, 15, 47. — *Desired a murderer.* Barabbas. Luke xxiii. 16 — 19. The pitch of their guilt was revealed in the fact, that they not only caused a holy and just person, the Prince of life, to be put to death, but had even preferred a murderer to him. Every circumstance is introduced and arrayed, so as to give their wickedness its true and vivid colors. — *Killed the Prince of life.* Contrasted with "murderer" above. The one took life, the other gave it ; the one destroyed existence, the other conferred the highest state of being, — moral, spiritual life. The word here rendered "Prince" is literally "leader," "chief," "conductor," and, in Heb. ii. 10, is translated "captain." The idea is, that he is the conductor to spiritual, immortal life ; not that he is the original creator and author of either our physical or moral being. John x. 10. Jesus came to enlarge and enrich our true life ; to extend the boundaries of our faith, and hope, and love ; to give our spiritual faculties a higher, wider, and happier exercise. Whoever lives in him, truly lives. — *Whom God hath raised from the dead, &c.* God glorified his Son by raising him to life, after the Jews had put him to a cruel and ignominious death ; of which resurrection the apostles were constituted witnesses to the world. One of their most important offices

God hath raised from the dead ; whereof we are witnesses. And 16 his name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know : yea, the faith which is by him, hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. And 17 now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did *it*, as *did* also your rulers. But those things which God before had showed by 18 the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath

was to bear testimony to this all-enlightening fact, this sublime truth, without which all their preaching was vain, and their converts were yet in their sins. Acts iv. 2; 1 Cor. xv. 12-20. In these last verses, an implied antithesis is run between the apostles the supposed, and God the real, cause of the cure ; between the wicked conduct of the Jews and the moral sense of Pilate, a heathen governor ; between their treatment of Jesus, and the honor shown him by God ; between the choice of Barabbas, a murderer, and the rejection of the guide to life ; between the death inflicted on the Messiah by his countrymen, and the life from the dead bestowed by God. There is a strength and majesty in these addresses of the apostles, a power of reasoning and of appeal, which make them especially worthy of the study of all Christian teachers ; and which prove that the fishermen of Galilee had received a wisdom, far superior to the knowledge of their times.

16. *His name, &c.* John xv. 26 ; Acts ii. 33. The miracle is referred to its true source in the faith reposed in Jesus. The word "name" often stands for the person himself. The value of faith, as here stated by Peter, corresponds with the frequent testimony of our Lord to its efficacy. "Thy faith hath made thee whole." — *Whom ye see and know.* Unless the facts had really taken place as related, could the apostle appeal so confidently and triumphantly to their truth ? Would an im-

postor repeatedly demand attention and investigation, and refer to the personal knowledge of his auditors ? — *Yea, the faith which is by him.* The idea of faith, as the essential condition to the miracle, is so important that it is repeated in this second clause of the verse. The miracle would prove morally efficacious only in proportion as it was associated with Jesus ; in whose name, and for the furtherance of whose gospel, it was worked. Faith in Jesus, as the Son of God, and the promised Messiah, is as necessary now as then, in order that his religion may work its cure of our diseased and infirm characters.

17, 18. As Neander has observed, "After Peter had said what tended to convince them of their guilt, he adopted a milder tone, to infuse confidence, and to revive the contrite. He brought forward what might be said in extenuation of those, who had united in the condemnation of Christ, 'that in ignorance they had denied the Messiah,' and that, as far as they and their rulers had acted in ignorance, it was in consequence of a higher necessity. It was the eternal council of God, that the Messiah should suffer for the salvation of men, as had been predicted by the prophets." — *I wot.* Old English for "I know," from the Anglo-Saxon, *wit-an*, to see, to wit, to know ; from which comes our word *wit*. — *Through ignorance ye did it*, i. e. put Jesus to death. The same extenuation of their conduct was given by

19 so fulfilled. Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come

our Lord himself, upon the cross, Luke xxiii. 34: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do ;" and by Paul, in Acts xiii. 27; and in 1 Cor. ii. 8: "Which [wisdom] none of the princes of this world knew ; for, had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." This apostle also assigns the same palliation of his persecution of the Christian church. 1 Tim. i. 13. It is clear, in these cases, that ignorance is not adduced as an entire excuse, but as a mitigation of the guilt. The Jews were culpable for their ignorance. They did not wish to know, did not hear, and see, and understand with candor, but wrapped themselves up in their prejudices, and turned a deaf ear to the teachings of Christ. The ignorance of Paul was also sinful, because he had not taken the pains to know the truth in so important a matter, and before pursuing such high-handed measures of persecution. Such is the universal rule. That men do not know their duty extenuates, but does not excuse, their misconduct ; for it is their duty to study and know truths so vital ; no obligation is more imperative. — *By the mouth of all his prophets.* All is not to be pressed. The general voice of prophecy, rightly understood, proclaimed a suffering, as well as an eventually victorious, Messiah. Luke xviii. 31, xxiv. 26, 27, 46. Compare Is. liii. 3-10; Dan. ix. 26. — *Christ.* "The Christ," the Messiah. Campbell remarks that "God does not force the wills of his creatures ; but he makes both their errors and their vices conduce to effect his wise and gracious purposes."

19. *Repent ye.* Mark i. 15. He now makes an application of his doctrine, and appeals to their consciences and hearts. If they had erred

through ignorance, they had now an opportunity to make amends for their past wickedness. The particular sin he calls upon them to repent of, was the sin of rejecting and crucifying the Messiah : that was their leading iniquity. — *Be converted.* Literally, "turn." He exhorts them first to repent, to feel remorse for their conduct, and resolve to amend ; and then to turn from their evil course to the path of life and peace. One word implies rather the change of mind, and the other the reformation of the conduct. — *That your sins may be blotted out.* Acts ii. 38; Is. xliv. 25. Notwithstanding their great guilt in the rejection and crucifixion of the Messiah, God was still ready to forgive them on condition of their repentance and reformation, and their now becoming the disciples of their crucified Saviour. Mat. xiii. 32. If they would repent and turn, their "sins would be blotted out." This figure of speech is taken from effacing or blotting out what is inscribed on a tablet, or in a book ; as God is represented figuratively as keeping a book, in which he records the evil actions of men ; a book of remembrance, from which, if they repent of what they have done, he obliterates the accusing entries. It does not appear that the conditions, or the effects of pardon, are any different now, from what they were before the death of Christ. They are still repentance and reformation ; the same under the Jewish and under the Christian system. The death of Jesus was not to affect in the least the fundamental principles of the divine government, but to act upon the human heart, and bring it into harmony with the will of God. The strain of Moses and the prophets to the wicked and disobedient was, Repent, and

from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ, 20 which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must 21 receive, until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets, since the

you shall be forgiven. John the Baptist and Jesus preached repentance, as the preliminary step to entering the kingdom of heaven. And now we find the apostles taking up the same exhortation, and urging home, with irresistible power, on their hearers, the duty of repentance, and the promise of mercy. But it is nowhere said in the Bible that forgiveness cancels all the consequences of sin; that no blemish or stain is left; that the penitent sinner is as pure and fair as if he had never sinned at all. Ps. xcix. 8. Pardon removes the greatest evil, the state of alienation from God, and the fear of his displeasure; but many of the physical and moral effects of sin still remain. The wound may be healed, but a scar is left. Therefore fear, fear to sin.—*When the times of refreshing shall come.* Or, better, “that the times of refreshing may come.” A variety of opinions is held respecting the meaning of this phrase. But the general idea is this, that, if they would repent and reform, they would be pardoned, and would enjoy, nationally, that happy state of peace and joy belonging to the Messiah’s kingdom. “The times of refreshing”—literally, “of breathing again”—were conditional, and depended upon the fulfilment of duty on their part. If they would accept the proffers of divine mercy, and comply with the obligation of the new covenant, a happier season would come, when the moral and spiritual laws would be obeyed, when truth, and liberty, and holiness, and love, would reign. The golden age of their untiring hopes would open up on the world. The kingdom of God

would come, and his will be done on earth as in heaven.—*From the presence of the Lord.* Rendered by Bloomfield, as a Hebrew circumlocution for “by God’s providence.”

20, 21. *And he shall send Jesus Christ.* This is connected with the preceding clause, “that the times of refreshing may come, and that he may send Jesus Christ.” Acts i. 11. This refers to the coming of Christ, not personally, but in the spirit and power of his religion, especially at the overthrow of Jerusalem and Judaism. The times of refreshing would also be the times of the coming of Christ in the spirit, with which he would penetrate the world, the preaching of his disciples, and the reproduction of his own life and likeness in the characters of his followers.—*Preached unto you.* Griesbach and other critics read, “appointed or destined for you.” Jesus was sanctified and sent by the Father for the rescue and salvation of the world, dead in trespasses and sins. He was set apart for this office. The speaker urges the point, that Jesus came not to preach himself, not to do his own will, but the will of him that sent him; that he was the ordained ambassador, clothed with the authority of Heaven, and entitled to the obedience of men. He was no pretender, no impostor, but the very Son of God, the venerated Messiah, the heavenly King. There could only be guilt and ruin in rejecting his claims; but, on the other hand, times of refreshing would follow the faith and practice of his religion.—*Whom the heaven must receive.* Or, rather, “must retain;” or, “whom it is proper that the heavens

22 world began. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things, whatsoever he shall say 23 unto you. And it shall come to pass, *that* every soul which will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.

should retain." This was thrown in to meet a difficulty in the Jewish mind. The Messiah was expected to reign in person on the earth. But he was withdrawn at his ascension, and was no more to be seen guiding and animating his followers. The apostle assures his hearers that the heavens ought to retain him, that it was not proper that he should be personally present during the process of moral renovation in the world. Lightfoot paraphrases the whole passage thus: "However, therefore, ye have crucified Christ, yet God shall still send you Jesus Christ in the preaching of the gospel, to fulfil these things. Him, indeed, as to his person, the heavens do contain, and shall contain, until all these things be perfected; expect not, therefore, with the erring nation, his personal presence always on earth, but he shall make up and constitute all things by us his ministers, until the times determined and prefixed for the perfecting of this restitution shall come." — *The times of restitution of all things.* The times of restoring or accomplishing all things. Milman remarks that "This restitution of all things, in the common Jewish belief, was to be almost simultaneous with, or to follow very closely, the appearance of the Messiah;" and he hints that Peter may not yet have been entirely disengaged of the Jewish notion that the Messiah would immediately reappear, to fulfil to the Jewish people all that they had hoped from this greater than Moses. Acts i. 6. "The times of restitution," and "the times of refreshing," ver. 19, are thought

by some to be the same. They are equivalent to the time when the prophecies relating to the Messiah should be accomplished, when Christianity should prevail, and a new moral creation arise. Mat. xvii. 11; 1 Cor. xv. 25; Heb. x. 12, 13; 2 Pet. iii. 13. Newcome, with Pearce, paraphrases the sentence thus: "When all things shall be disposed, ordered, settled, in a perfect state, from their present imperfect one." There is no reference, probably, to the end of time, or to the general resurrection. — *Which.* Concerning which times. — *By the mouth of all his holy prophets, since the world began.* Or, "from the beginning." Nothing is more clear than that Judaism contemplated a successor superior to itself; that the Old Testament points to the New; that Moses and the prophets saw, in prophetic vision, Jesus and the apostles. And, in reasoning with the Jews, Peter well presses this argument, that Jesus was foretold by the patriarchs and prophets; and that, so far from his deserting the ancient faith, he was most directly and faithfully carrying it out to its legitimate and expected results, and advancing the great hope and desire of the nation to the consummation, devoutly to be wished.

22, 23. *Moses.* The Jews relied much upon the authority of Moses; and if the apostle could adduce his great name on his side, the effect would be irresistible. He shows that, so far from rejecting Moses, he clung with the most reverential faith to his teachings. — *Unto the fathers, i.e. the ancient Israelites.* — *A prophet.* See Deut. xviii. 15, 18, 19. The

Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel, and those that follow 24 after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these

general view of the commentators is, that Moses predicts a series of prophets, rather than any single individual; and that the words are applicable to Jesus, as he was the greatest and the last of the line; and what is said of the guilt of disobedience, is especially applicable to those who rejected and crucified him.— *Of your brethren, like unto me.* Acts vii. 37. This sufficiently indicates the character of the prophetic line, and of the last, as of all preceding members. Jesus resembled Moses, though in nature and office far exalted above him, in the fact that he was the head of a new covenant, that he was a lawgiver, and that he was a mediator between God and his people. How free from jealousy was that great Hebrew leader, in thus pointing out the long line of his successors, and the illustrious personage at its close! How much of the self-forgetting spirit, which afterwards characterized John the Baptist!—“he must increase, but I must decrease.”— *That every soul, &c.* This is not an exact quotation, but gives the sense of Deut. xviii. 19, “I will require it of him.”— *Shall be destroyed from among the people;* i. e. not put to death, but cut off, excommunicated—the most fearful of all punishments. He could be no true Israelite, who did not hearken to the prophet whom Moses himself had pointed out, and for which his religion was but a preparation. The argument of this address of Peter, the more we consider his audience, will be felt to be unanswerable. We cease to wonder at the immense number of his converts. Acts iv. 4. When we compare his present speech with his former blindness and vacillation, can we hesitate to ascribe the

difference to the working in his mind of new influences, shed abroad on the day of Pentecost?

24. *All the prophets.* A general term, not to be cut to the quick; a majority, many of the prophets.— *Samuel.* He was the most distinguished religious teacher and prophet after Moses, and the Jews called him “the master of the prophets.” He is mentioned in honorable connexion with Moses and Aaron, in Ps. xcix. 6. In 2 Sam. vii. 16, 25, 29, we have references to the perpetuity of the house of David, which is fulfilled in the reign of Jesus the son of David.— *As many as have spoken,* i. e. officially, professionally, as religious teachers and prophets. Gen. xii. 3; Is. xi. liii.; Dan. ix. 26; Hag. ii. 7, 9. Though we may find it difficult, in all cases, to point out the exact prediction in so many words, yet we find, in most of the prophetic books, a looking forward and upward to a glorious age to come; a yearning after a purer and happier condition of the world; brilliant flashes of hope in the deepest national abasement; and an unfaltering faith in that overruling God who would bring light out of darkness, and make the wrath of men praise him. Hardly any object in the world is more sublime, morally speaking, than one of those old Hebrew seers, plunged in the midst of a dark and degraded generation; yet lifting up his head, and looking beyond his time to the auspicious future, to the Messiah and his kingdom; and, amidst poverty, contempt, and sin, still maintaining an unshaken loyalty to his God, and perhaps falling a victim to popular odium or royal jealousy, as a preacher of righteousness.

25 days. Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And 26 in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first, God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

25. *Ye are the children of the prophets.* A phrase expressive, not of literal descent, but of endeared moral relation. They were the sons, pupils, disciples, of the prophets. They professed to follow their guidance, and trust in their predictions. He appeals to them to make good their honorable relation to the prophets, on this occasion, by hearkening to their prophecies of the Messiah. He would awaken their reverence, and enlist even their pride on the side of truth. He would warn them not to disgrace, by their infidelity, the exalted character of being the sons of the prophets. — *Of the covenant.* They were the children of the covenant, i. e. admitted to its privileges. They were a party in the compact, by which the Lord would be their God, and they should be his people. Gen. xxii. 18. As they would not forfeit their title to the great blessings of the ancient covenant, the venerable charter of their national existence and distinction, — as they would be faithful to that binding compact of two thousand years, — he entreats them not to reject him who was the centre and crown of the whole, the Messiah, in whom the whole human species were to be blessed. — *Made with our fathers.* The reverence they owed their ancestors should not suffer them to break lightly the ancient agreement. — *Saying unto Abraham, &c.* Gen. xii. 3, xvii. 2–10, xviii. 18. Since the Messiah was to spring from the line of Abraham, it was thus that, in his seed, all the nations of the earth should be blessed. This sentence is a declaration of the univer-

sality of the Christian religion, — the richest and the most needed blessing that can be conferred upon the world. Gal. iii. 8, 16. Thank God, prophecy is now becoming history, and all nations are being blest by the gospel: the heralds of the cross pierce the darkest corners of the earth, and Jesus is preached and obeyed among some of all the kindreds of the earth. — *In thy seed.* Through thy seed, i. e. the Messiah, the descendant of Abraham.

26. *Unto you first.* The Jews were first favored with the privileges of the gospel. The opportunity was given to the lost sheep of the house of Israel to return to the fold of the true Shepherd. But if they lent a deaf ear to the voice of mercy, then the apostles were to turn to the Gentiles. Mat. x. 6; Luke xxiv. 47; John iv. 22; Acts xiii. 46. — *Having raised up,* i. e. originally provided. Ver. 22. No reference is here made to his having raised Jesus from the dead. God had created, appointed, sanctified, and sent his Son on this great moral errand of bringing men back from their wanderings. He was the Messenger of his will, the Ambassador of his counsels. — *To bless you.* Ver. 25. You would share in his blessings with the rest of the kindreds of the earth, or even earlier, and more than they. — *In turning away every one of you from his iniquities.* Words of truth and power. Jesus came to save us not in our sins, but *from* them. Mat. i. 21. The apostle seems here to become aware of the spiritual nature and object of Christ's mission, as a moral agency to save men from error and

## CHAPTER IV.

*The Imprisonment of Peter and John, their Examination before the Sanhedrim, and Release, and the Prosperity of the Christian Church.*

AND as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain

sin. What greater blessing for all the kindreds of the human family than this! Speak not of gold and silver, of genius, or office, or sceptres. Do we not know that they are bawbles all, when compared with turning from error and sin to the faith, obedience, and service, of the ever-living Father? Neither earth nor heaven has any greater good to bestow, than to wean men from their base and selfish desires, and implant the germ of a moral, spiritual, and heavenly life. Too often, alas! has the beautiful purpose of his religion been overlooked, and the gospel been made an engine of party or power. But there it still stands on high, the lofty, the monumental truth, that Jesus came to save men by turning them from wickedness of every kind, from all abuses and perversions, from injustice, and sensuality, and impurity, to reconcile them to God, and breathe a new spiritual life into their souls. O that every denomination of Christians might inscribe this sublime purpose on its banners, and go forth to war, not with its brethren, but with the common and mortal foe, with sin and misery! And when we see the great spiritual design of Christianity, its benevolence and excellence, how worthy was it then of labor, danger, and even the sacrifice of life; and how worthy is it now of the same boundless devotion in its behalf! — *Every one of you.* Religion is a personal concern. Christ would bless and save every man. But there is no truth more certain, than that we can be blessed and saved by him only in proportion as we are faithful in our duties, and exert our own powers to love and

follow him. There is no magic, no spell, in his salvation, by which the slaggard or the scoffer can be rescued from the path of ruin, without any effort on his part. His religion is a system of motives, means, helps, in beautiful analogy with the great fabric of Nature and the living presence of Providence. Jesus saves us by teaching us the truth; by the communication of spiritual influences; by spurring our flagging powers, and enkindling our deadened affections; by presenting high and holy motives, drawn from God, from life, death, and eternity, fitted to bear on the vital springs of action, the living point of the heart. He has come to give us thrilling convictions of the evil and ruin of sin, to uncover the judgment scene, to bring immortality to light, and to lead us to act with a wise reference to futurity. But only as we cherish an individual faith in Christ, and a sense of personal responsibility, can we be “every one of us,” turned from our iniquities, and blessed and saved with an everlasting salvation.

## CHAPTER IV.

1. *And as they spake.* “While they were speaking” would be a more definite rendering. The division into chapters interrupts the narrative commenced in the last chapter. — *The priests.* They attended upon the temple service in great numbers, and would be jealous of any interference with their religious influence over the people. — *The captain of the temple.* Or, “ruler of the temple.” Some uncertainty exists respecting this officer. Lightfoot, Hammond, and others, call him

2 of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them, and put

a Roman commander, whose station was in the neighboring tower of Antonia, and whose duty it was to repress any disturbance or insurrection within the courts or avenues of the sacred edifice. But the more probable opinion, advocated by Le Clerc, Lardner, Kuinoel, Rosenmüller, Bloomfield, Robinson, Olshausen, and many others, is, that it was a Jewish officer, the prefect of the guard of the Levites ; stationed to preserve order and to watch over the sacred things of the temple ; and variously called by the Talmudists, "the man of the mountain of the house," and "the head of the ward." An officer of this description is spoken of by Josephus, where he mentions, in his Antiquities, the binding of "the high-priest Ananias, and the captain Ananus ;" and also calls Eleazar, the son of the high-priest Ananias, "captain." Lardner remarks that, as "there was a great variety of ministrations, at the temple, and a great number of priests and Levites always in waiting, but especially at the feasts ; it is very likely there was an officer who presided over each division, and that there was one who had command above all the rest." See Luke xxii. 4, 52 ; also John xviii. 12. There appears to have been, on this occasion, no tumult, as in Acts xxi. 31, to arouse the jealousy of a Roman. Besides, we can hardly suppose that the priests would associate so familiarly with a Gentile, lest they should be defiled. — *The Sadducees.* They constituted one of the leading Jewish sects, and at this time appear to have been in the ascendant. See note on Mat. iii. 7. They were accounted more severe in their administration of public affairs, when in

power, than the rival sect of Pharisees. — *Came upon them.* The original implies suddenness and violence of approach, as if with hostile intentions.

2. *Being grieved.* More than that, "filled with anger, indignation." They were not sorry, but provoked at the conduct of the apostles. — *Taught the people.* The priests would be more particularly offended at this, because they deemed it the exclusive right of the Rabbins, and doctors of the law, and scribes, to teach the people upon the subject of religion. This ecclesiastical jealousy of interference has been exhibited at various periods of history, and many a reformer has met with the frowns of those who were officially the guardians of the interests of truth and righteousness, but who proved unworthy of their high trust. — *Through Jesus, the resurrection from the dead,* i.e. that the resurrection was proved and exemplified by the case of Jesus. The Pharisees, who believed in this doctrine, would be indignant to have it advocated in connexion with him whom they had crucified. But the Sadducees more particularly would be exasperated at the preaching of this truth, because they denied immortality to the human spirit. Acts xxiii. 8. The motives, therefore, suggested in this verse for the persecution of the disciples, are entirely in harmony with what we elsewhere learn of the opinions and pretensions of the priests and Sadducees. No want of charity was shown by the historian in putting this construction upon their proceedings.

3. *Put them in hold.* Or, "in prison ;" perhaps the same mentioned in Acts v. 18. As it was now even-

*them* in hold unto the next day: for it was now even-tide. Howbeit, many of them which heard the word, believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand. — And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and elders, and scribes, and Annas the high-priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high-priest,

ing,—for the miracle was wrought after three o'clock in the afternoon, Acts iii. 1,—they were put into custody until the next day, when the Sanhedrim could be assembled: though in the case of the Master, their hot impatience, and perhaps fear of a reaction in the popular mind, urged them to a night session. Mat. xxvi. 74, xxvii. 1.—*Even-tide.* Evening. “Tide” is from the Anglo-Saxon word *tud*, which means *time, season, hour*. It was probably now about the hour of twilight, called by the Jews the second evening; the first, according to the Pharisees, beginning at the ninth hour, or our three o'clock, Acts iii. 1, or, according to the Caraites, a class professing greater purity, at sunset, or about our six o'clock, P. M.

4. *Howbeit.* “But.” Notwithstanding the check now intended by the assault of persecution, the Christian church increased to a great number.—*Heard the word.* The Improved Version and Sacy render it “heard the discourse of Peter.” Luke throws in the present verse to show what the effect was of the apostle’s preaching, recorded in the last chapter, before he proceeds to give the narrative of the trial.—*Believed*, i. e. became followers of the Messiah, for faith was the essential preliminary to discipleship.—*Number of the men.* Of souls, of human beings.—*Was.* Original, “was made,” or “became.”—*About five thousand.* The writer does not profess perfect accuracy, but gives the round numbers. The idea seems to be, not that so many were now

added, but that the whole number up to this time, amounted to about five thousand. Acts ii. 41, 47. If this growth is astonishing, we must recollect the powerful agencies brought into operation upon the Jews at this time; which enabled the apostles, in one sense, to do greater works than their Master, as he had predicted. John xiv. 12. The death of Jesus, his resurrection, and ascension, with all the accompanying circumstances, had prepared the way for great effects. The apostles stood upon a vantage ground, not before afforded, from which to urge home the truths of the gospel.

5, 6. *Rulers.* By which is probably meant persons of great authority and influence in Jewish affairs, who had seats in the Sanhedrim. This body consisted of about seventy members, before whom the apostles were tried, as their Lord had been before them.—*Elders and scribes.* These were different classes, distinguished, the one rather by age and gravity, the other by their employment as transcribers and interpreters of the Jewish law. The whole, together, constituted the highest council of the nation.—*Annas the high-priest.* Called by Josephus, *Ananus*. He had been high-priest formerly, and still retained the name, though it is supposed that he now held the office of vicar, or deputy, Caiaphas being the actual high-priest. He had seen the remarkable fortune of having five sons, and one or two sons-in-law, in the office of high-priest. He is mentioned in connexion with Caiaphas in Luke iii. 2; and

7 were gathered together at Jerusalem. And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name 8 have ye done this? — Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, 9 said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, if

to him Jesus was first carried, as it would seem, out of deference to his high standing. John xviii. 13. — *Caiaphas.* The fact of his relentless hostility to Jesus, evinced how slight was the probability of an impartial trial to the apostles. Mat. xxvi. 65; John xi. 49—53, xviii. 14. — *John and Alexander.* It has been variously conjectured by the learned, that John was the celebrated Jo-chanan ben Zaccai, a Jewish Rabbin, of whom it was said, at his death, that “the glory of wisdom ceased;” and that Alexander was Alexander Lysimachus, a very wealthy man, brother to the distinguished Philo, and connected by marriage with Agrippa the elder; but nothing certain is known of them beyond their names in this place. — *The kindred of the high-priest.* Acts v. 17. The heads of the twenty-four courses are understood by some; while others, with more likelihood, regard the kindred as signifying the connexions of the powerful house of Annas. By the above enumeration, the historian tacitly exhibits the hopelessness of justice being done to the prisoners, and the formidable array of their enemies. — *At Jerusalem.* The Sanhedrim sometimes sat in other places. Wakefield, however, intimates, by his version, the idea that the members of the council belonging to Jerusalem assembled, while those living elsewhere were absent, on such short notice.

7. *Set them in the midst.* The Sanhedrim were seated in a semicircle; and persons coming before them on business, or criminals, were placed literally “in the midst,” or in the area surrounded by the seats of the

members. It is to be inferred, from ver. 14, that the restored cripple was also put into custody, with his friends, and now arraigned with them before the council; or that he voluntarily presented himself as an evidence in their behalf. — *By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?* Mat. xxi. 23. They perhaps thought to intimidate them, or to make them ashamed of avowing as their Master the crucified Jesus. They composed the most venerable body of the nation, men of great weight and influence with the people, of vast learning, and long practice in civil and ecclesiastical affairs; and they might well suppose that their very presence would strike terror into the fishermen of Galilee, common and unlettered men. They ask them by what power or art, and by the invocation of what name, they had wrought the cure of the lame man, related in the previous chapter. “The Jews believed very wonderful works, even miracles, to be performed by magic arts and *incantation*, i. e. invoking the names of certain angels or illustrious patriarchs,” as Abraham, Solomon, and others. Compare Acts xix. 13. They therefore inquire the origin of their power, and what name they used, treating it as if it had been a case of exorcism or witchcraft, in which an unlawful or diabolical influence had been used. Mat. xii. 24. The Jews pretend that Jesus wrought his miracles by getting possession of the ineffable name of God, deposited in the sanctuary, and using it as a potent talisman.

8, 9. *Filled with the Holy Ghost.* i. e. the Holy Spirit of God. Mat. x. 18—20. That the mind of the

we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, *even* by him doth this man stand here before you whole.

apostle was illuminated by wisdom from on high, may be inferred from the difference of his conduct now, and in the same place on a former occasion, related in Mat. xxvi. 69-75, and the change of his views respecting the object of Christ's coming. Acts i. 6. There is no evidence that any new descent of the Spirit came upon him now; but he and his associates were constantly breathing a new atmosphere of life and light since the day of Pentecost. The bands of ignorance and prejudice had dropped off forever, and they henceforward lived, and moved, and had their being, in a new world; where they saw things as they are. They were truly filled with the Holy Spirit; they were spiritualized; they no longer dwelt on the ideas of temporal fame and power; they saw the sublime spiritual realities of God's kingdom, and were true to the lofty convictions of right and duty. Thus elevated and illuminated, what strength, courage, boldness, power, and soundness of mind, they display, compared with their timidity in before flying, like a flock of frightened sheep, from the jaws of their pursuers! Now they became truly "sons of thunder;" while their lightnings enlightened the world, "coming out of the east, and shining even unto the west"—*Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel.* While he thus addresses them with the most profound respect, he tacitly reminds them of their great responsibility, as acting, not only for themselves, but for the nation, the chosen people of Israel. They were "a city set on a hill." It became them to

do nothing unworthy of their high stations and extensive influence.—*The good deed done to the impotent man.* Men are usually arraigned for their evil deeds; if we are judicially examined for the benefit we conferred on one of our suffering fellow-creatures, we are prepared to say in whose authority we have done the miracle. There is a tinge of irony in the answer of Peter.—*By what means.* Rather, "by whom," by whose name, or authority, the cure was wrought.

10. *Unto you all, and to all the people of Israel.* It was not a deed to be ashamed of or hidden; he wished it might be proclaimed to the whole nation, in connexion with him in whose name and authority it was performed.—*By the name.* The rulers had asked them, "By what name have ye done this?" Ver. 7. The reply is emphatically put in like terms as the question.—*Jesus Christ of Nazareth.* Every word carries with it weight and power. It was in the name of Jesus, the Messiah, of Nazareth—the most distinguished being, originating from what they regarded, in their false estimate of things, as the lowest of places, out of which nothing good could come, John i. 46.—*Whom ye crucified, whom God raised, &c.* He here vividly contrasts, as he did in Acts iii. 13, the manner in which the Messiah was treated by his countrymen, with the manner of his treatment by God. He charges home upon them, with unequalled boldness, the crime of crucifying the Messiah. They had arraigned the prisoner to try him as a violator of their laws; but, lo! the

11 This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which  
12 is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in  
any other: for there is none other name under heaven given

tables are turned, and the prisoner himself becomes judge, and the rulers culprits, to answer to the gravest charge, to the most awful crime, committed against the laws of the Highest! Peter, who denied his living Lord and Master, owns him departed, and asserts, in the face of a Sadducean high-priest and Sanhedrim, his resurrection from the dead. Whom they had killed, God had brought to life; whom they had raised on the cross, God had raised to heaven.—*By him doth this man stand.* I repeat, he says, it was by him that the miracle was wrought; and this man, who never *stood* before from the day of his birth, now *stands* before you as a living witness to the truth of my statement. “The timid, trembling, yielding, vacillating Simon, he who just before was terrified by a servant girl, and who, on the lake, was afraid of sinking, is now transformed into the manly, decided, and firm *Cephas*, (rock,) fearless before the great council of the nation, and, in an unwavering tone, asserting the authority of him whom *he* had just before denied, and whom *they* had just before put to death. Peter had no worldly motive to actuate him. Nothing but a conviction of the *truth* could have wrought this change, and transformed this timid disciple into a bold and uncompromising apostle.”

*Barnes.* Nothing is said, upon these occasions, of John, except that he is with Peter. We can readily conceive how much the more ardent and impetuous apostle leaned for sympathy and support upon the disciple whom Jesus loved; and what a silent strength was shed into his naturally wavering spirit, Gal. ii. 2–14, from that beaming presence of love and of fortitude, which, if it dared less,

could bear more, and which had stood in the hall of Caiaphas, and at the foot of the cross, when Peter had quailed and fled. Compare John xviii. 15, 16; Mat. xxvi. 75; John xix. 26, 27.

11. *This is the stone, &c.* This is a quotation from Ps. cxviii. 22, and applied, by way of illustration, to himself by Jesus, Mat. xxi. 42, as it is also here by Peter. The idea is, that Jesus, whom they had rejected, was the true Messiah. The figure is taken from architecture, in which the builders lightly value at first a stone, which they afterwards employ as a top-stone, or coping. It is not the corner-stone of the foundation, but of the summit, which is here spoken of, though elsewhere a similar figure is used of the stone at the basis. Is. xxviii. 16; Rom. ix. 33; Eph. ii. 20; 1 Peter ii. 6. Him whom they had denied, God had owned; whom they had insulted, God had honored; whom they had slain, God had raised up to life; whom they had loaded with opprobrious names, God had honored with the highest titles; whom they had cast aside as a worthless stone, God, the supreme architect, had wrought into his lofty edifice as the most conspicuous head of the corner, to bind the whole together, and complete the structure.

12. *Salvation.* Literally, “safety,” “deliverance.” Two methods of interpreting this passage prevail; one limiting it to the case of physical, miraculous cure; the other extending it over the whole ground of spiritual and eternal salvation. Probably, as a distinguished critic has remarked, the word in the original means, in the first instance, restoration to health; and, by a kind of an-

among men, whereby we must be saved. — Now, when they <sup>13</sup> saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took

tithesis, which is very common, is afterwards applied in a more extensive sense. It is the same word used in Luke xix. 9, and John iv. 22, and in many other places, with a similar import, referring to spiritual blessings. The idea of spiritual safety was no doubt suggested by the restoration of the lame man to soundness; but that this verse is not a mere frigid declaration of the only healing miraculous power being resident in Christ, or capable of being invoked in his name, is apparent from the preceding verse; in which the Messiah is spoken of in his highest capacity, as exalted by God to the summit of power and influence, though rejected and crucified by men. Again, the last part of the verse, “whereby we must be saved,” militates against the notion of mere bodily cures being intended. The whole forms a fitting conclusion and virtual exhortation suitable at the close of his address. — *None other name.* By which is meant system, faith, religion. — *Given.* Or, “established.” — *Whereby we must be saved.* In the paraphrase of Haynes, “There is no other or different way of salvation than what Christ taught, nor any ‘different teacher.’ The way of salvation is but one; and a different teacher must be a false teacher.” It is not meant that none are saved of the heathen, or Muhammedans, or Jews, or infants, that never heard of the Saviour; or that individuals of these classes that are saved, are saved without their own choice or knowledge, by any change which the death or mediation of Christ has worked upon the fundamental laws of God. For we are assured, on the best authority, — that of this apostle himself, — that “God is no respecter of

persons; but, in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.” Acts x. 34, 35. If any man, in any part of the earth, has become, under the influence of nature, providence, and the Spirit of God, without the Bible and the Saviour, holy, and just, and true, in one word, Christ-like, he is saved; he is prepared for a future state, for heaven, for the presence of God and the society of Jesus. He has thus, without knowing it, become a Christian, so far as he could. There is but one kind of goodness in the world; and he who possesses that, under whatever system, whose spiritual nature and affections are in healthy exercise, and whose aim is heavenward, is saved here and hereafter. This view does not contradict in any measure the text, when fairly interpreted; for it is clearly a general, not a universal, proposition; or, if universal, it is so in the sense of spiritual resemblance to Jesus, that all must be saved by being like him, having his spirit. It is prospective, also, not retrospective, and signifies that Christianity is to be the only saving religion in the world; the great moral lever to raise the degraded and fallen, the grand agency of the soul’s rescue, guidance, and culture. Moses was superseded; henceforth mankind were to date from Christ, as the author of a new moral epoch and creation, the Adam of a new human species. John xiv. 6; 1 Cor. iii. 11.

13, 14. *The boldness of Peter and John.* Or, more exactly, “the freedom of speech,” the confidence in defending themselves. 2 Cor. iv. 13. The apostles exhibited no audacity or irreverence, but a free, frank, and ready speech, and an assured and

14 knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they

unabashed demeanor, not usual in common persons who were brought before so august a council as the Sanhedrim. — *Unlearned and ignorant men.* This is a very unfortunate rendering of our translators, and represents the apostles as inferior to what they really were. That they were neither “unlearned” nor “ignorant,” in the usual sense of those words, is apparent from the Gospel which one, and the Epistles which both, wrote; from the speeches here given; from their sayings in other places; from the fact that they had been so long under the instruction of Christ; and from the presumption that they were as well acquainted with the sacred literature of their nation, as the fidelity of parents, and the general care taken in this respect, would make them. The first word simply expresses the idea that they were “illiterate,” not that they were not versed in the Scriptures; their quotations showed them to be so; but that they were unacquainted with the rabbinical lore, with the traditions and Talmuds, the oral law, which had been accumulating for ages around the Mosaic writings, and which constituted the everlasting study and hair-splitting of the Jewish schools. The scribes and doctors of the law looked with supreme contempt, John vii. 49, upon those that were uninitiated into these endless mysteries and labyrinths of comments, and fables, and sophistries, by which the traditions of men had been elevated above the commandments of God; and which made more account of tithing mint, and anise, and cumin, than of observing judgment, mercy, and faith. See Mat. xi. 25; 1 Cor. i. 27. Jesus and his followers came to bring men back to the simple and eternal truths

of God’s kingdom; and, though possessed of this highest and best of all knowledge, they were called “illiterate,” because they had not received the education of sophists and casuists. Mat. xiii. 54; John vii. 15, 16. The other term, “ignorant,” is, in the original, “common men,” rendered, by Luther, Cranmer, and Tyndale, “lay men” or persons. Reference is simply made to the private, unofficial stations of Peter and John. They held no civil or ecclesiastical office, yet presumed to work miracles and teach the people: this was, in the eyes of wise scribes and lawyers, contrary to all precedent and propriety. — *Took knowledge.* Or, “recognized.” They first marvelled, and their wonder stimulated their recollection or perception. — *That they had been with Jesus.* “Had been his companions and adherents.” They recognized the source of their power in him who had been their Master and Teacher. — *The man which was healed standing.* The last word is emphatic; he *stood* before them, having been completely cured of his lameness. This was now the second day, and the cure still held good, and there was no relapse. — *Could say nothing against it.* Could not gainsay or deny it. Ver. 16; Acts xix. 36. This is important testimony. But, though they could not refute the argument of Peter *intellectually*, their *hearts* were hardened, that they *would* not believe in the divine origin and right of Jesus as the Messiah. Prejudice and pride prevented them from bowing to the lowly Nazarene. Barnes remarks, that, though the apostles were “not taught in the schools, yet there was an important sense in which they were *not* unlearned and ignorant men. Their example should not, therefore, be

could say nothing against it. But when they had commanded 15 them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, saying, What shall we do to these men ? for that indeed 16 a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. But that it 17 spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name. And they 18 called them, and commanded them not to speak at all, nor teach

pleaded in favor of an unlearned ministry. Christ himself expressed his opposition to an unlearned ministry, by *teaching them himself*, and then by bestowing on them miraculous endowments, which no learning at present can furnish. It may be remarked, further, that, in the single selection which he made of an apostle after his ascension to heaven, when he came to choose one who had *not* been under his personal teaching, he chose a *learned man*, the apostle Paul, and thus evinced his purpose that there should be *training*, or *education*, in those who are invested with the sacred office."

15, 16. *Commanded them to go aside.* To enjoy greater opportunity and freedom to deliberate together, as to the best management of the affair. This was customary in courts, where, after an ambassador had given his message, he was requested to withdraw for a time, until the counsellors could confer together and come to a decision.—*Council.* In the original, "Sanhedrim;" the technical name for the Jewish council of seventy, used here, however, rather as the place of their meeting, the council-chamber.—*What shall we do.* They were in a dilemma, as men always are when they are in the wrong. John xi. 47. They *could* not deny, and they *would* not acknowledge, the cure that had been performed, and the conclusion to which it irresistibly led, of the truth

and authority of Jesus as the Messiah. They wished, therefore, to hush up the matter, terrify the preachers into silence, and get over the difficulty in the easiest way possible.—*Notable miracle*, i. e. a miracle well known, published abroad. It was spread through the city. Every body had heard of it.—*We cannot deny it.* It was in vain, therefore, for them, wise and influential as they were, to attempt to discredit so plain a matter of fact. If the people were ignorant of their curious learning, yet they could not be cheated out of the testimony of their own senses. They had seen and known the lame man, and they now beheld him restored. These facts were too stubborn to be winked out of sight.

17, 18. *That it spread no further among the people.* They were anxious that the doctrine, in furtherance of which the miracle had been wrought, should be stayed from wider progress among the people, over whom they professed to hold supreme jurisdiction. How utterly vain, how childishly weak and wicked, such a plan ! that the gospel spread no further among the people ! that the rising sun go down in the east ! How little had they computed the resources of the truth and its destiny ! what blind guides to the people whom they pretended to lead ! Has not this history, in its essential features, been repeated since, and man vainly and madly sought to stifle the convictions of duty, and stop the diffu-

19 in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken 20 unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but

sion of light? Such efforts may be successful for a time; but

“Truth, crushed to earth, shall rise again;  
The eternal years of God are hers;  
While Error, wounded, writhes in pain,  
And dies amidst her worshippers.”

— *Straitly threaten.* A Hebraism, literally rendered “threaten with a threat,” and expressing intensity of meaning. — *Not to speak at all, nor teach, in the name of Jesus.* They forbade them from proclaiming in any way the name and authority of Jesus, or using it among the people at all, even to work a miracle and a cure.

19, 20. *Whether it be right in the sight of God, &c.* The principle on which they act they are ready to submit to their judges themselves, for they felt assured that they could not impugn its validity. They were the servants of God, not of man. They had been chosen to go forth on an important mission to the world. They had been the bosom companions of the Messiah, and received his command to preach his gospel, and feed the flock. They had been endowed with a spiritual influence to qualify them yet further for their work. Should they pause, turn back, and obey the command of man, to give up this enterprise? There could be no doubt respecting their duty, and by that they intimate they shall abide, come what will. They had once fled; but they flee no more; their minds are made up, and they are ready to do and suffer all in behalf of their Master. The avowal of their principles is still more explicit in Acts v. 29. The commentators quote from heathen philosophers, expressions breathing a kindred spirit, as if the duty was so plain as to be visible even in the

light of nature. Thus Socrates said to his judges, “I embrace and love you, O ye Athenians, but I will obey God rather than you.” Thus, too, Arrian enjoined, “When thy superiors command thee any thing, thou must remember there is One above who sees thee, and that thou oughtest rather to please him than man.” In things lawful and innocent, it is not only right, but a duty, to obey the magistrate; but in things unlawful, and clashing with the will of God, it is equally right and a duty to obey God rather than man. “It is a rule in the common law of England, that if any statute be made contrary to the law of God, it is null and void.” It ought to be the rule of every land. No nation can prosper, or even be a nation, that sets human legislation above the everlasting laws of God. The first question is, what is right; the second, what is expedient. What is right will necessarily be expedient, in the grand issue; but what seems, to the short-sighted vision of man, expedient for the time being, may not be right. There is danger of sometimes mistaking what the will of God is, what is right, and confounding the dictates of our own passions with the intimations of conscience and the voice of the Almighty. It is therefore needful to enlighten, as well as to obey, conscience. — *We cannot but speak the things, &c.* Necessity was laid upon them to preach the gospel. They must speak or die. Truths were struggling within for utterance — truths which they had been commissioned to proclaim; truths vital to the interests and salvation of a sinful world. They were chosen to be witnesses to the great facts of the life, death, and resurrection, of Jesus, and they could not

speak the things which we have seen and heard. So, when they 21 had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all *men* glorified God for that which was done. For the man was above 22 forty years old on whom this miracle of healing was showed.

And being let go, they went to their own company, and report- 23 ed all that the chief-priests and elders had said unto them. And 24 when they heard that, they lift up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou *art* God, which hast made heaven,

prove "disobedient unto the heavenly vision," 1 Cor. ix. 16. However much they respected the authority of the Sanhedrim, they plainly intimated that they should disregard their commands, in consideration of the higher law of the Eternal.

21. *Further threatened them.* The Sanhedrim, seeing the purpose of their prisoners, and judging them to be contumacious, add yet further threatenings, and then dismiss them. — *Finding nothing how they might punish them.* Finding no way to proceed against them, as they had violated no law, and as the sympathy of the people was enlisted in their favor. — *Because of the people.* "The common people heard Jesus gladly," and they were in general much more open to conviction than the learned and powerful of the nation. Their favor repeatedly befriended both Jesus and his apostles, and stayed the uplifted arm of violence. But they were fickle-minded; and when they had shouted hosannas one day, they would, perhaps, cry, Crucify him, the next. Mat. xxi. 26, xxvi. 5; Acts v. 26. — *Glorified God, &c.* They referred the cure of the cripple to its true source, in God, who had given such power to men. The better feelings of their nature praised and reverenced so wonderful and beneficent a deed; and the rulers feared to inflict on Peter and John what their hearts prompted of wrong and cruelty.

22. *Above forty years old.* This fact was not stated before, but it comes in here incidentally, to show that one cause of the devout praise of the people was the cure of the lameness; after it had proved so inveterate and hopeless, and their sympathies had been so long called forth towards the poor helpless sufferer, laid, as he was, to beg in a public place.

23. *They went to their own company.* Or, "to their own associates," or friends; probably to the twelve, or to the one hundred and twenty. — *The chief-priests and elders.* As the great council was composed chiefly of these classes of men, their names often stand for the Sanhedrim itself. Peter and John naturally resort for sympathy and guidance to the circle of fellow-believers and fellow-laborers, and report their affairs and dangers.

24. *Lift* (for "lifted") — *with one accord.* Probably one led the service, and the rest joined with one heart and mind. If there were enemies without, there was concord within. — *Lord, thou art God, &c.* Their prayer was addressed to God. They did not follow any previous form of devotion, but took one adapted to the feelings and wants of the occasion. Their invocation of the Sovereign of the creation, and rising to the thought of Him, as the Maker, Proprietor, and Disposer of all worlds and beings, was beautifully

25 and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is; who, by the mouth of thy servant David, hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and 26 the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and 27 against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, 23 for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before

adapted to soothe and sustain their hearts under their severe trials. They were in the hands of the Almighty. He would do what was right and best. All things were at his disposal, and his servants need not fear.

25, 26. *Thy servant David.* Ps. ii. 1, 2. This identifies David as the author of the Psalm. — *The heathen rage.* A figure, in the original, taken from the neighing and impatience of horses. This Psalm is supposed to have been composed during the hostility of surrounding heathen nations, the Moabites, the Philistines, and Amalekites; and is applicable, by accommodation, to the persecution of Christ and his apostles by the Jews, who, in this instance, occupied the place of the heathen, in conjunction with Herod, Pilate, and the Romans. — *Imagine vain things.* Or, “meditate or purpose vain counsels.” For their plans against infinite Power and Wisdom would necessarily prove futile. The Psalmist remonstrates with them on the folly of the attempt to fight against God and his anointed King. — *Stood up*, i. e. stood side by side, or banded together for mutual help. We have in these two verses an example of Hebrew parallelism in poetry; the last clause in a sentence or verse conveying the same idea as the former, with a slightly varied expression. — *The Lord*, i. e. Jehovah, God. — *His Christ.* More properly rendered, “his Anointed,” as in the Psalm itself, where the Septua-

gint version reads, “his Christ,” the Greek noun meaning *Anointed*, of which the verb is given in the succeeding verse, “whom thou hast anointed.” David was consecrated as king by Samuel, anointing him with oil in the midst of his brethren, 1 Sam. xvi. 13, the customary rite of inducting priests, prophets, and kings, into their office. Hence, though Jesus was never literally anointed, he was appropriately termed the *Christ*, *the Anointed*; as being sanctified by God as a spiritual king and prophet to his people and to the world.

27, 28. *Thy holy child Jesus.* Translated properly by some, “thy holy servant.” — *Whom thou hast anointed.* Or, “set apart” to the office of teacher and Saviour. *Messiah*, in Hebrew, and *Christ*, in Greek, mean *Anointed*. — *Herod.* Tetrarch of Galilee, sometimes designated as king. Luke iii. 1; Mark vi. 14. He was in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus’ trial, who was sent to him by Pontius Pilate, in the hope of shifting the responsibility of condemnation from himself upon another. Luke xxiii. 7, 11. — *Pontius Pilate.* He was the procurator of Judea at that time, and, by his unwilling sentence, pronounced the doom of crucifixion. Mat. xxvii. 24, 26. Thus it might be appropriately said, that “kings and rulers” had united against the Anointed of the Lord. — *Gentiles*, i. e. Romans, whose soldiers were the executioners. — *The people of Israel.* Who, instigated by the elders

to be done. And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and 29 grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, by stretching forth thy hand to heal; and that signs 30 and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

— And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where 31 they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

and chief-priests, had demanded, with loud outcries, the death of the Messiah. Thus “the heathen and the people” conspired against the Lord and against his Christ.—*Gathered together.* Griesbach adds, from many authorities, “in this city.” This great wickedness had even been done in the holy city itself, the city of God upon Mount Zion.—*Thy hand and thy counsel determined before.* Or, to adopt the paraphrase of Newcome, “thy power and thy counsel, thy powerful counsel,” determined before. Peter says this to obviate the objection made against a suffering, crucified Messiah. It had been so willed by God, though the actors unconsciously performed their part in fulfilling the divine purpose, and were to be absolved from none of the guilt of their bad motives. Gen. i. 20. See notes on Acts ii. 23, and iii. 18.

29, 30. *Behold their threatenings.* Render them futile, look upon them to frustrate their evil counsels. He here refers to the menaces of the Sanhedrim in ver. 17, 21.—*That with all boldness, &c.* With all freedom of speech, the same expression as used in ver. 13. They prayed not that they might be revenged upon his enemies, not that they might be delivered from danger and suffering; but their single and heroic petition is, that they may prove adequate to their great and glorious office of preaching the truth to the world; and that God would follow it with those signs and miracles which

would seal it with a divine sanction.—*Stretching forth thy hand to heal,* i. e. exerting thy divine power to heal. The image is taken from the act of stretching out the hand to confer a favor or blessing, or to guide one.—*Signs and wonders.* Hebraism for “wonderful signs,” miracles, which were the unanswerable arguments that God was with them.—*Holy child Jesus.* See note on ver. 27. The word rendered “child” would be more properly translated “servant,” as the same word is in ver. 25, where it is applied to David. Not that the English is improper, except as a translation; it is not entirely faithful here to the original. Jesus *was* the holy child and Son of God, but different words are elsewhere used to convey the idea. Can we read this beautiful and lofty strain of supplication, and not feel how good and how strengthening it is to pray—to pray in union with our friends—and when danger and perplexity are around us, to turn our faces heavenward, and behold there the glory and goodness of Him that sitteth above all! How strange that we should be willing to struggle on alone, when such a Helper, such a Defender and Comforter, is nigh!

“O, sweet it is to know, to feel,  
In all our gloom, our wanderings here,  
No night of sorrow can conceal  
Man from thy notice, from thy care.”

31. *The place was shaken.* At the conclusion of their prayer, the place of their meeting was agitated by an earthquake, or some other commotion

32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart, and of one soul: neither said any *of them* that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things com-

of the elements, as a sensible token of the answer and favor of God. So, in Acts ii. 2, 3, there are external manifestations of the descent of the Spirit of God, fitted to impress, through the senses, the soul. The approach of God, or an unusual communication of his power, is often represented, in the Old Testament, under the image of an earthquake or other striking exhibition of power in the outward creation. Even the heathen, according to Virgil, deemed an earthquake a sign of the favor of the Deity, under some circumstances. Acts xvi. 25, 26. — *They were all filled with the Holy Ghost.* Bloomfield remarks that we must not take *Ghost* or *Spirit* here in a personal sense. It is the influence of the Spirit of God. In the language of Lardner, "There was a fresh effusion upon them of knowledge, power, and comfort; whereby they were assured of their being enabled to do every thing needful to confirm the truth of Christ's resurrection." Accordingly, it is said there, at ver. 33, "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus." It would seem that they had now a better understanding of truths before revealed. — *They spake the word of God with boldness*, i. e. with freedom and frankness of speech. See remarks on ver. 13, 29. Their prayer was answered, and they were inspired to rise above the fears and menaces of their enemies, and faithfully discharge their high office of proclaiming the truth. Mark xi. 23, 24; James v. 16.

32. *The multitude of them.* Now amounting to several thousands, ver. 4, and daily increasing. Acts ii. 47. — *Of one heart and of one soul.* Acts ii. 42. These words describe

their love and union in the strongest manner. They were animated with those noble sentiments of love to God, and love to man, which make of one spirit all who receive them in their fulness and purity. The ancients give several illustrations of the unity of mind produced by friendship. The Jews describe two friends as one man. Aristotle, being asked what is a friend, replied, "one soul dwelling in two bodies." Plutarch quotes an ancient sentence of the same purport, "two friends, one soul." Ovid speaks of those "who, two in body, were one in mind." If any thing could exceed the convincing argument afforded by the *miracles* in support of Christianity, it is its *moral power* in moulding, humanizing, and sanctifying the hearts of its converts.

— *That aught of the things, &c.* Used in illustration of their warm sympathy for one another, rather than as a literal expression that all the landmarks of property were entirely removed. — *They had all things common.* In use, rather than in possession. See notes on Acts ii. 44, 45, where the picture of the early church is colored with the same beautiful hues, as in the present passage. They testify practically their love to one another by yielding up their property for the general good, and disregarding their own rights of possession in their readiness to relieve and bless all. Riches became a secondary consideration, in comparison with the glorious truths and interests of their divine Master. Mat. xix. 21. Their example, in its spirit, if not in its letter, is especially worthy of being followed in this age; when so many make haste to be rich, and violate the laws of God and man in their unholy schemes;

mon. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the 33 resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as 34 many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid *them* 35 down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.—And Joses, who by the 36 apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, *and* of the country of Cyprus,

and when the rust of gold and silver has eaten into the heart and flesh of Christian piety itself.

33. *With great power gave the apostles witness, &c.* Both by their preaching and miracles. Ver. 31; Acts ii. 43.—*The resurrection, &c.* This is the key-stone of the gospel. By confirming this, they gave power and stability to the whole edifice of doctrines and promises, which the Master Builder had erected. In particular, they prostrated the system of the Sadducees, a species of half infidelity, which had then risen to authority, and sat in the seat of Moses. Acts xxiii. 8. For they could not only reason on the subject; but could assert, without fear of contradiction, and on the testimony of hundreds of witnesses, the memorable fact, that Jesus had personally risen from the tomb, and appeared among the living.—*Great grace was upon them all.* Or, “great favor was upon them all,” or all were held in great favor. The repute in which they were viewed by the people is here probably intended, not the blessings bestowed on them by God. Compare Acts ii. 47. Their brotherly love, their ardent piety, and their superiority to the world, gained the favorable regard of the people at large, despite the hostility of the elders and rulers. How rapid and triumphant would have been the progress of Christianity over the world, had this ancient excellence

continued to diffuse its sweet savor among the followers of Jesus!

34, 35. *That lacked.* That was reduced to indigence and distress. The reason why none were thus unfortunate is assigned below, viz., that the more wealthy sold their possessions and deposited the proceeds in a common stock.—*As many as.* Better, according to Bloomfield, “such as;” not that all necessarily did it; but such, in general, as were possessors of property, sold it for distribution.—*Laid them down at the apostles' feet*, i. e. placed the price at the disposal of the apostles; who naturally acted as the economical, as well as the religious, heads of the new community until a further organization, which soon took place, was made. How wide the contrast between the spirit now seen, and that of him who but a short time before sold the Master himself into the hands of his enemies, at the price of a common slave! May Heaven save us from selling our principles and souls for money; but rather give us that self-forgetting benevolence, as well as stainless honesty, which casts at the feet of the Lord the proceeds of our industry and fortunes, to be disposed of as shall seem to him best for the good of the suffering, and the hungry, and the friendless!—*As he had need.* The just and beneficent rule of distribution.

36, 37. *Barnabas.* A further account is given of this individual in

37 having land, sold *it*, and brought the money, and laid *it* at the apostles' feet.

## CHAPTER V.

*The Death of Ananias and Sapphira; the Rescue of the Apostles from Prison, and their Trial before the Jewish Council, and Release, after the Speech of Gamaliel.*

BUT a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife,

succeeding portions of the history. Acts ix. 27, xi. 22, 25; and elsewhere; for commentators have not hesitated to identify the Barnabas here mentioned with the companion of Paul. His benevolence here was a fitting germ to his noble devotion in a wider field of travelling, preaching, and confirming the churches. "The son of consolation," perhaps of a milder and softer temperament, he formed an appropriate associate with the ardent and indomitable Paul; as did the beloved John with the hasty and impetuous Peter.—*Being interpreted.* This indicates the adaptation of this history to foreigners, rather than to Jews, to whom the explanation would have been unnecessary.—*The son of consolation.* Rendered by others, "of exhortation," or preaching, implying that he was distinguished in that capacity; which was not inconsistent, indeed, with his being a "son of consolation."—*A Levite.* One of the tribe of Levi, the son of Jacob, which was set apart to the sacred office among the Jews. Num. iii. Deut. xviii. 6–8. They were to have no inheritance, for the Lord was their inheritance. They received, however, forty-eight cities in different parts of the land. Num. xxxv. 2–8, and they could purchase and hold landed property, as in the case of Jer. xxxii. 6–9.—*Cyprus.* The largest island in the Mediterranean Sea, lying in the eastern part, extremely fertile, and celebrated for its worship of the heathen goddess

Venus. It abounded in wine, oil, and honey, but its inhabitants were indolent and sensual. Dion Cassius states that the Jews were very numerous in this island. Acts xiii. 4, xv. 39, xxvii. 4.—*Sold it, &c.* Mat. x. 9, 10. His case is mentioned apparently as one example of many, only the more remarkable, as he afterwards became a distinguished teacher of the gospel in conjunction with Paul. See notes on ver. 34, 35.

We notice in this chapter,—(1.) The paramount importance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, in the preaching of the apostles. Ver. 2, 10, 33. Has it the same prominence in modern, as it had in ancient, preaching? (2.) The courage of the apostles in proclaiming unwelcome truths, is worthy of imitation in every age. Ver. 2, 11, 17, 29, 33. (3.) The superiority of the gospel to all other religions, though its Founder was put to death and disowned by the chosen people of Israel. Ver. 11, 12. (4.) The impotence of man to resist the cause of truth by threats and persecutions. Ver. 17, 33. (5.) The comfort of devotion and the answer to prayer. Ver. 24–31. (6.) The rich fruits of the gospel, worthy of him who planted, of them who watered, and of God who gave the increase. Ver. 32–37.

## CHAPTER V.

This chapter is intimately connected with the preceding one, and proceeds to relate a terrible event growing out of the custom of liber-

sold a possession, and kept back *part* of the price, (his wife also 2 being privy to it,) and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled 3 thy heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back *part* of the price of the land ? While it remained, was it not thine own ? and 4 after it was sold, was it not in thine own power ? why hast thou conceived this thing in thy heart ? thou hast not lied unto men,

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ality therein described, and which was most conspicuous in the case of Barnabas. The present division of the Scriptures into chapters and verses, often without reference to the connexion of the subject, very much mars and interrupts the meaning and effect of the word of God. The reader should therefore exercise his judgment in perusal, and read rather according to the sense, than abide implicitly by the artificial partitions.

1, 2. *Ananias, with Sapphira his wife.* Nothing is known of them except what is related in this sad history, and all conjectures are idle. The curtain is drawn aside by the hand of the historian for a moment, and we look in upon the tragic stage, and recognize a few individuals whom he points out, and then the pall of oblivion drops over the whole.—*A possession.* Land. Ver. 3.—*Kept back part of the price.* Or, “kept it for himself,” or embezzled, or purloined it. At first, this withholding of a portion of the value appears to be the crime they committed ; but it will be seen afterwards that their sin was their keeping a part back, and professing that what they brought forward, was the whole proceeds of the sale. Ver. 4.—*His wife also being privy to it.* What aggravated, if possible, the offence, was, that they entered into a conspiracy between themselves to practise this deceit. Sins committed in conjunction with others cannot be lightened, and a portion shared by each ; but press,

with their whole weight, upon every partner in the transaction, and assume even a darker dye from the mutual consciousness of guilt. They are thus more shameless, and more influential for evil, from the countenance and incitement of numbers. Let us never “ lay the flattering uncation to our souls,” that sin can be made any less sinful by many engaging in it ; or that there can be any easy and innocent partnership in doing wrong. — *A certain part.* But ostensibly as if it were the whole.—*Laid it at the apostles' feet*, i. e. placed it at their disposal ; as, for the present, they were the financiers, as well as teachers, of the new association. See Acts iv. 37.

3, 4. *But Peter said.* He became supernaturally acquainted with the hidden iniquity. It becomes those who predicate omniscience of Christ, because he knew the hearts of men, Mat. xii. 25, to consider what inference, according to that rule, should be drawn respecting Peter in this connexion.—*Why hath Satan, &c.* The word *Satan* properly means an adversary, and was probably used by the Jews and other Orientals as literally signifying the being and source of evil. All sin and moral wrong were said to spring from the suggestions of this prince of darkness. He was supposed to be vast in presence and power, as if rivalling the Deity himself. Such was the language of the times. Such was the figurative method of speaking adopted by our Saviour and his apostles, in conform-

5 but unto God. And Ananias, hearing these words, fell down, and

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ity to the customs of the age. Thus, with a similar metaphor, we ourselves speak of *hellish* conduct; as if it were conduct too wicked to be conceived from ordinary motives, and must have been inspired from hell. Thus, also, are the epithets *diabolical* and *satanic* often employed. See notes on Mat. iv. 1-11; John xiii. 2, 27. To show that the wickedness was not from a foreign source, but from within, the apostle says, ver. 4, "Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine own heart?" Covetousness was the Satan that prompted Ananias and Sapphira. — *Filled thy heart.* An idiom for "instigated or emboldened thee." — *To lie to the Holy Ghost*, i. e. to endeavor to deceive us, the apostles, in whom the Holy Spirit is resident, who are endowed with extraordinary divine gifts, and authorized to exercise a commanding influence upon the destinies of the Christian religion. The Holy Ghost is not here to be regarded, as any person or influence, separate from the person and influence of God himself. As the spirit of man and man are one, so the Holy Ghost and God are one and indivisible. God is Spirit. The gifts and influences of the Holy Spirit are the gifts and influences of God. Thus Athanasius says, "For where the Spirit of God is, there is God; as it is said, 'Hereby know we that God dwelleth in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.'" 1 John iv. 13. — *While it remained, was it not thine own?* The apostle shows, that his crime consisted not in withholding the purchase money; but in double-dealing, in pretending to contribute all, instead of a part, to the general fund. His crime was deception, "falsehood, the fountain of all evil." It appears that none of the Christian converts were compelled, by any law

or regulation of the apostles, to sell their property, and throw it into the common stock. It was no condition of discipleship, but the pure and voluntary dictate of Christian love and brotherhood. And even after they had sold their property, it was still under their absolute control, as directly implied by the question of the apostle, in the present verse; and they could contribute a part, or the whole, as they saw fit, to the common treasury of benevolence. But Ananias and Sapphira had undertaken to play a hypocritical part, and seem more benevolent than they really were. — *Why hast thou conceived this thing in thy heart?* This is a comment on the expression above, "Why hath Satan filled thy heart," &c., as if the act was so bad a one, that it must have had a worse than human origin. — *Thou hast not lied unto men, &c.*, i. e. not so much unto men as unto God. Ex. xvi. 8. The offenders might think that the apostles were most wronged and sinned against; but Peter carries their minds up higher, to God. The sin was committed against the all-seeing One, against his Son, his Spirit, his church, his servants. It was a sacrilegious fraud. They had no personal feeling about the deception; but were indignant that the cause of Heaven should be wounded by the base hypocrisy of its pretended friends.

5. *Fell down, and gave up the ghost.* Or, more correctly, "expired." It is not probable that his death was caused by the operation of mere natural causes, as remorse of conscience, or sudden fright, but by the direct visitation of God; whether by the interposition of Peter, or not, is left undetermined; but probably he invoked no avenging power, as no trace of it is left in the text, at least

gave up the ghost. And great fear came on all them that heard

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until we come to ver. 9. A great objection has been raised, from this passage, against the gospel itself; an objection, however, capable of being answered. Since God hath given life to all, he has a right to take that life when and how it pleaseth him. Mere life is of less value than moral and spiritual results. How often have multitudes perished in furtherance of some great good, or to remove some great evil! Witness the deluge, the destruction of the cities of the plain, many wars, and the lives sacrificed in behalf of religion. In the present case, this dreadful blow fell with healing efficacy upon the infant church. If we first consider the crime of Ananias, we shall see it to have been of a very heinous nature in itself, and very dangerous to the Christian cause. It was falsehood, fraud, hypocrisy, against which our Lord ever hurled his most vivid rebukes. The case of this wretched man and woman was probably something like this: They share with their countrymen the general and delusive expectation of a temporal Messiah. They become converts to the gospel, with much of this feeling. They are looking for honors, and rewards, and pleasures. They feel, however, some uncertainty of the issue of the matter. The Sanhedrim is arrayed against them. Others cast in their all with undoubting faith into the treasury of the Lord. But not so Ananias and Sapphira. They have one eye upon the new religion, and the other turned to see what loop-hole of escape there would be, if Christ should prove to be an impostor, and his community be dispersed. (See an article in *Scripture Interpreter*, vol. iv. pp. 73-77, by C. Palfrey.) They conclude, therefore, to give only a part, and reserve a part of their estate against a change

of circumstances. But they are urged by vanity, and the desire of the favor of men, to profess more than they performed. They attempt to serve God and Mammon at the same time. They pretend to be entitled to a living from the common stock, when they had not put all into the common stock. In the weak and worldly state of their faith, they are easily led into a snare. Their sin was aggravated, too, by the fact that it was purely voluntary. No one required them to sell their land; or, when they had sold it, no one required them to cast all the proceeds into the general treasury. Again, they conspired together to do the sin, which increased the turpitude of the offence. They also deliberated upon it; there was not the excuse of sudden passion, or unforeseen temptation. It was a piece of cool, deliberate, and hardened wickedness. To turn, here, from the sin to the condition of the Christian church, at that time, we shall see the necessity of some severe and powerful example, to arrest the corruption and hypocrisy that would fain creep into the bosom of the brotherhood. The stroke must come as a bolt from heaven, as a visitation from God, and carry healing and life in its course. Though there was no cloud hovering over the church by day, nor fire shining as its watch-light in the night, yet it was essential that a profound and living conviction should be begotten in every mind, that God was around it as a munition of rock; that it was under his care, and nothing could prevail against it. Hence the wholesome and necessary severity of this punishment. And we see, afterwards, that the effect was salutary in the highest degree. — *Great fear came on all, &c.* This was the intended result. The design was to

6 these things. And the young men arose, wound him up, and  
7 carried *him* out, and buried *him*. — And it was about the space  
of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done,  
8 came in. And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye  
sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much.  
9 Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together  
to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold the feet of them which  
have buried thy husband *are* at the door, and shall carry thee

strike a proper awe into the minds of the people. They saw that it was a matter in real earnest to be a Christian, and that false pretences would not avail, except to the ruin of all adventurers and speculators. Thus speaks Neander: "So terrible was this judgment, in order to guard the first operations of the Holy Spirit, before the admixture of that poison, which is always most prejudicial to the operations of divine power on mankind; and to secure a reverence for the apostolic authority, which was so important as an external governing power for the development of the primitive church, until it had advanced to an independent steadfastness and maturity in the faith." The effect was beneficial and desirable; the character of the young association of disciples was vindicated, its purity preserved, and its faith mixed with a deeper veneration for God, and his spiritual influences, and for the claim of unreserved dedication of life, time, possessions, and talents, to his service.

6. *The young men.* Some have supposed these to be a species of officers in the Christian church; but the more probable opinion is, that they were simply the younger portion of the community present, on whom the duty naturally devolved, as the most vigorous and alert of the company. — *Wound him up.* As the Jews used no coffins in burial, the sole covering of the body consisted of folds of cloth swathed around it.

Such are the coverings of the mummies, which are now disinterred. The body, in the present instance, may have been wrapped in the mantle worn while living. — *Buried him.* According to Jahn, the latter Jews, unlike the earlier ones, buried the body soon after death. The heat of a tropical climate naturally required an early interment. In the present instance, the haste with which the act was performed, probably arose in part from the nature of the death.

7. *Three hours after.* Bloomfield suggests, that it was at the next prayer-time, as the intervals were of three hours. Various reasons why the wife had not heard of the awful end of her husband, may be conjectured; but it is a characteristic of the sacred historians that they state facts "without note or comment," explanation or inference. The fact that she did not know what was done, accounts for her coming in, which would otherwise have seemed unnatural, after the tragic scene described above.

8, 9. *Answered.* Better, "addressed" her. — *For so much*, i. e. for as much as your husband said, as much as you professed, or brought into the common fund. — *Yea, for so much.* She thus endorsed the criminal act of her husband, and became not only privy to it, but a joint actor. — *Agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord.* They formed a conspiracy against the truth. "The Spirit of the Lord" is here the same

out. Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up <sup>10</sup> the ghost. And the young men came in, and found her dead, and carrying *her* forth, buried *her* by her husband. And great <sup>11</sup> fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these

as "the Holy Ghost" in ver. 3, and "God" in ver. 4. In one case, God, or "the Lord," is introduced; in another, "the Holy Spirit;" and, in the third instance, both are united, and we have "the Spirit of the Lord." They are all thus demonstrated to be identical; as much as if we should speak of Milton in one place, of his mind in another, and the mind of Milton in still another; we should mean but one and the self-same being in all. "To tempt the Spirit," was to put it to the proof, to attempt to elude or deceive it, or those who acted under its guidance and by its inspiration. They did not, as the chief motive of their conduct, seek to tempt God, or to overreach his all-present Spirit; but, in seeking their sinister ends of covetousness, hypocrisy, and vanity, they did not hesitate thus to do; it was no obstacle in their way to reflect that their conduct was hostile to the will of God.— *The feet, &c.* Agreeably to a Hebrew idiom, by which, instead of the persons themselves being mentioned, that part of the body is spoken of which is exercised in the contemplated act.— *Shall carry thee out.* Or, "will carry thee out;" not a threat, or imprecation, but a prediction, or the statement of a fact. Peter knew, but it does not appear that he commanded, what their fate should be. He simply announced the will of a higher power in her instantaneous death.

10, 11. *Yielded up the ghost.* More correctly rendered, "expired;" the same word in the original as that translated, in ver. 5, "gave up the ghost."— *Buried her with her hus-*

*band.* Melancholy union in death, as there was guilty partnership in life! Others of the early church fell martyrs to the cause of truth, and their names were honored; but Ananias and Sapphira died victims to their own base passions and hypocrisy, and are enrolled forever with the company of Judas, the traitor. Dreadful fate, worthy not merely to strike a momentary dread at the time, but to send a piercing voice of warning through all ages; saying, Beware of falsehood, beware of hypocrisy, of vainglory, of covetousness, of want of faith; for in these snares you may be caught, and perish spiritually, as well as bodily! "Well did the Saviour know that hypocrisy would be one of the most insidious and deadly foes to the purity of the church; at its very *threshold*, therefore, he set up this warning to guard it, and laid the bodies of Ananias and Sapphira in the path of every hypocrite that would enter the church."— *Great fear came, &c.* The terrible visitation of God worked its intended result. Great awe fell upon the church and the surrounding circle of people who heard the facts. The apostles were seen to be accompanied by the visible guardianship of a higher Power, and that it was madness to oppose or deceive them. If any were meditating the same guilt, their purpose was nipped in the bud. The purity of the church was guarded, and a holy reverence descended upon all minds. Thus, by this outward display of God's power and overruling care of his religion, high spiritual influences were conveyed; the soul was deeply affected through the

12 things. — And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with 13 one accord in Solomon's porch. And of the rest durst no man 14 join himself to them: but the people magnified them. And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men 15 and women;) insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid *them* on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.

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senses, as in the case of the sound and tongues of fire, Acts ii. 2, 3, and the earthquake, Acts iv. 31.

12–14. *By the hands of the apostles.* A Hebraism for “by the apostles.” — *Many signs and wonders*, i. e. miracles. — *And they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch.* John x. 23. See note on Acts iii. 11. This statement is made in proof of the unity and increase of the Christian church, which had now become so large as to require the ample portico of Solomon as its place of meeting. The English version improperly commences a parenthesis with this clause. — *Of the rest durst no man join himself unto them.* Of various interpretations, it is preferable to understand that none of the rest, i. e. that none of the same stamp of Ananias and Sapphira, the worldly and hypocritical, dared unite themselves with the Christian church. The offence was not repeated. None ventured to join themselves to the new community with sinister views, but only true and upright believers in the Lord. Ver. 14. — *The people magnified them*, i. e. the multitude at large. So far from any odium or imputation arising against the apostles or the Christian community from the case of Ananias and Sapphira, or any criminality being charged against them, as has been done by the unbelievers of later times; the respect of the people was greatly increased by the demonstration they had witnessed, of the superintending

power of God over the infant cause of Christianity. — *Believers were the more added to the Lord, &c.* Or, as others render it, “believers in the Lord were added,” &c. This is not inconsistent with the first clause of ver. 19. For though the base and unspiritual were overawed and kept back by the recent dispersion, yet all true hearts were by this very cause more drawn to the pure and heaven-watched church. Ver. 14 is made parenthetical by Griesbach, Bloomfield, and other distinguished critics.

15. *Insomuch that they brought, &c.* This is connected with ver. 13. The readiness with which they brought the sick to be cured, was an evidence how much the people magnified them. — *Into the streets.* Or, according to the margin, “in every street.” — *Beds and couches.* The first descriptive rather of what the rich used, the other the small matress or couch of the poor. All classes resorted to him to be healed.

— *That at the least the shadow of Peter, &c.* Comp. Mat. ix. 21, 22; Acts xix. 11, 12. Observe, it is not said that the shadow actually cured any, or that it effected a cure, without the distinct volition of Peter. On the contrary, it is plain, from all the accounts of miracles in the New Testament, that they were wrought by God at the will of his Son and the apostles, and not by any inherent, miraculous virtue communicated to any inanimate object. The wo-

There came also a multitude *out* of the cities, round about unto 16 Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits; and they were healed every one.

Then the high-priest rose up, and all they that were with him, 17 (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation, and laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in 18

man in the Gospels was cured, not by the hem of Jesus' garment, but by the exertion of his miraculous power; so the shadow of Peter had no intrinsic efficacy apart from himself, though it might perhaps be used as connecting the act and the agent. It was the same superstition that led the people to associate the idea of so much power with the mere shade of an apostle, that has in every age magnified the relics of saints in the Roman Catholic and other churches. The historian relates the fact, without comment, as an evidence of the growing faith of the people in the miraculous power of the apostles. There is no evidence in this or any other portion of the history, that Peter possessed any superiority over the rest of the apostles, except what was derived from the natural energy of his character. It was as Peter, and not as an apostle, that he took the lead in preaching and working miracles.

16. *A multitude out of the cities.* The reader will observe that *out* is in Italics in the text, showing that it was not in the original language, but inserted by the translators in their version. Here, as almost every where else in the Scriptures, the sense is improved by leaving out the Italicised word, though there are exceptions to this general rule. The fame of Peter and the other apostles was widely extended; so that, as in the days of the Master himself, the sick of the whole region round about sought that aid, which they could find in no natural means.—*Vexed with unclean spirits*, i. e. those afflict-

ed with insanity, melancholy, or epilepsy; who, in the language of the times, were possessed with unclean or evil spirits. It is commonly said, by those who believe that these were real possessions of Satan or the devil, that such cases are always distinguished from mere sickness as such. So in this case; so in Mat. iv. 24, x. 1; Mark i. 32, 34, xvi. 17, 18; Luke iv. 40, 41, vii. 21. But in reply to this, Farmer, a great authority on this subject, in his Essay on Demoniacs, has justly said, “This is only one proof, amongst several others, of the New Testament, adopting the popular language on this subject.” Not that a real distinction did exist, but that one was supposed to exist between ordinary diseases and possessions. Again, the language of the sacred history is variable; sometimes lepers are distinguished from other sick persons, as much as are demoniacs, or the possessed of devils, as they are incorrectly rendered in our version. Mat. x. 8. Besides, the distinction in question, between demoniacs and sick people, may have also arisen from the fact that, in the former case, the mind, as well as the body, was affected, as is well known in epilepsy, insanity, &c. On this whole subject, see notes on Mat. iv. 24, viii. 28–34; Luke viii. 35.

17, 18. *The high-priest.* Probably Caiaphas, though the title was also given to Annas, in consideration of his past services. See note on Acts iv. 6. As Caiaphas had been a chief agent in the crucifixion of the Master, he naturally cherished a deep

19 the common prison. But the angel of the Lord by night opened 20 the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life. 21 And when they heard *that*, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught. But the high-priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the

malignity against his apostles and followers.—*All they that were with him*, i. e. his partisans, the members of the Sanhedrim and others of his own sect, as is explained in the next clause.—*Sadducees*. The Christian doctrine of resurrection, so frequently and powerfully urged by the apostles, especially conflicted with this sect, and therefore aroused all their hostility. It has been justly remarked that, though the Pharisees had more influence over the common people on account of their professed sanctity; yet that the Sadducees possessed the greatest power among the wealthy and educated classes of the nation. They appear at this time to hold the supremacy in the Sanhedrim.—*Indignation*. Literally, “zeal,” in a good or bad sense, though no single word in English precisely represents the original. The meaning here is, that they were filled with anger. The success of Peter and his associates stirred up all their fiery passions, and prompted them to new acts of persecution.—*Laid their hands on*, i. e. caused them to be arrested.—*Apostles*. Whether all the Twelve, or only Peter and John, is not stated.—*In the common prison*. Or, “public prison,” where common and abandoned malefactors were confined. Since the apostles could not be confuted in argument, or silenced by threats, Acts iv. 21, their enemies resolved to exercise the right of the strongest, and use the argument of force,—a method of procedure which has found too many imitators in every age. “The right of might” has

been substituted for the might of right.

19. *The angel of the Lord, &c.* There is no reason or opportunity of supposing aught, in this instance, but a direct and miraculous interposition of God, exerted through some instrument or agent, called an angel. The article *the*, before angel, is not in the original. “An angel of the Lord” would be more correct. Acts xii. 7, xvi. 26. This astonishing rescue was adapted to encourage the apostles in their course, to rebuke their persecutors, and to spread new emotions of wonder and reverence among the people towards the cause thus favored of Heaven.

20. *Speak in the temple*. They are freed for an object, viz., to continue their work of preaching. They are directed to enter the most public place, where they would meet the greatest concourse of people, at the same moment proclaiming the gospel, and, in the freedom of their own persons, exhibiting a striking evidence of its divine authority.—*All the words of this life*. A circumlocution for ‘the gospel;’ the leading doctrine of which was the resurrection from the dead, or life and immortality beyond the grave. John vi. 68, xvii. 3. The great truth of spiritual eternal life was especially distasteful to those, most active in this movement against the apostles. Chap. xxiii. 8.

21. *When they heard that, they entered, &c.* We see their promptness. With them, to hear, was to obey. They were not “disobedient unto the heavenly vision,” but were ready

senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. But when the officers came, and found them not 22 in the prison, they returned, and told, saying, The prison truly 23 found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors: but when we had opened, we found no man within. Now, when the high-priest, and the captain of the tem- 24 ple, and the chief-priests heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow. Then came one and told 25 them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are stand- ing in the temple, and teaching the people. Then went the 26 captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned. And when they had brought them, they set *them* before the coun- 27

again to plunge into the sea of difficulties which rolled around them. How sublime the heroism of these ancient "defenders of the faith"!—  
*Early in the morning.* They were freed during the night, ver. 19, and as early as the people assembled for their morning devotions, the apostles were present to address them. See Luke xxi. 38; John viii. 2.—*The high-priest came*, i. e. to the place of meeting, whether in the temple, the palace of the high-priest, or elsewhere.—*They that were with him.* See ver. 17.—*All the senate.* Literally, "all the eldership." This term is probably not used as synonymous with "the council" or Sanhedrim before mentioned, in order to give foreigners an idea of the nature and office of that body, as Schleusner conjectures; but stands for the elders of Israel in general, who were invited to be present upon this important occasion, on account of their age and wisdom. See chap. iv. 8, xxii. 5.

23, 24. *The keepers standing without, &c.* Griesbach rejects "without," as destitute of good authority. The prisoners had been taken out without injury to the prison, or the knowledge of the guard. Chap. xii. 6—9. The manner of operation is

not described, and conjectures are idle. It is sufficient that the hand of God opened a way for their release.—*The captain of the temple.* See note on chap. iv. 1.—*They doubted of them whereunto this would grow.* Or, as some translate it, "what this would be;" and others, "how this could be;" how the prisoners could escape from such close confinement. The priests and elders were thrown into perplexity. Bloomfield renders it into a popular expression, "They did not know what to think of it," which is expressive of wonder at some circumstance connected with any thing; as, for instance, the *means, manner, or event* of it. Chap. x. 17.

26. *The captain*, i. e. the prefect of the temple; a Jewish officer. See note on chap. iv. 1. The elders and priests received the astounding intelligence that their prisoners had not only escaped, but were again preaching in the most public place. Whereupon officers are despatched with the captain of the temple to arrest them again. But such was the general favor of the people, that they were obliged to treat them mildly, to escape a popular uproar.—*For they feared the people.* The

28 cil: and the high-priest asked them, saying, Did not we straitly command you, that ye should not teach in this name? and behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to 29 bring this man's blood upon us. — Then Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than 30 men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew

sense of the verse is improved by throwing this into a parenthesis, according to Winer and Bloomfield; the clause, "lest they should have been stoned," depending upon "brought them without violence," not upon "feared the people." "The common people" heard the apostles, as they did Jesus, "gladly." Their goodness, their wonderful and benevolent deeds, their excellent teachings, and the power which accompanied them, conciliated the good-will of a large class.

28. *Straitly command.* Literally, "command with a command"—a Hebraism for an earnest, peremptory injunction. Chap. iv. 17, 18, 21. The high-priest charges them with violating the laws of the Sanhedrim, a grave offence.—*In this name.* A natural feature appears here. They do not mention the person, as he was most odious to them, but refer to him in an indirect way. The apostles taught and wrought miracles only in the name of Jesus.—*Filled Jerusalem with your doctrine.* An enemy's testimony to the fidelity and zeal of the disciples; that, so soon after their ministry began, they had leavened to so great an extent the holy city itself, the heart and centre of the Jewish religion.—*Intend to bring this man's blood upon us.* Another touch of nature and reality. They avoid mentioning the name of Jesus Christ, but speak of "this name," and "this man's blood." Their consciences, too, are active, and the sense of remorse excited, as is seen by the accuracy with which they refer to the imprecation, made by the

Jews at the crucifixion of Christ, Mat. xxvii. 25, "His blood be on us and on our children." They begin to fear that his blood will be on them; but they only persist in being the more violent, the more nearly they are convinced of their sin and error. They wish to keep themselves in countenance by new and forced zeal. They therefore accuse the apostle of the very offence of which they had themselves been guilty, viz., of calling down the blood of Jesus upon the Jewish people and posterity. The addresses of Peter did, indeed, charge home the crime of putting the Messiah to death upon the Jewish nation, and particularly the rulers; but it was done to awaken them to repentance for so horrible a wickedness, and make them partakers of the blessings of the Messiah's kingdom. But it was no part of their object to stir up a sedition among the people against the elders and chief-priests on account of their implication in the Messiah's death, as the high-priest might imply in his accusation.

29, 30. *Answered and said.* Peter spoke in the name of the rest. In the Scriptures and other ancient writings, that is often attributed to many which properly belongs to only one.—*Obey God rather than men.* See notes on chap. iv. 19, 20.—*The God of our fathers.* He makes the same reference as in chap. iii. 13. He would convince them that it was no strange God, but the God whom the Jews worshipped, and their fathers before them, that was appearing for the redemption of his people

and hanged on a tree: him hath God exalted with his right hand **31** to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these **32** things; and *so is* also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to

by Jesus the Messiah. This appeal was one of peculiar force, and touched the springs of patriotism and veneration for their ancestors, the patriarchs and prophets of old.—*Raised up Jesus.* Referring, not to his resurrection from the dead, but to his being originally set apart for this work, honored with a divine commission. Chap. ii. 32, iii. 22, 26, xiii. 23.—*Slew and hanged on a tree.* Or, slew by hanging upon a tree, or cross. The primary meaning of the original is “wood,” whence come secondary senses of stake, post, gibbet, cross, or what is made of wood. He contrasts here, as upon former occasions, the wicked treatment of our Lord, by the Jewish rulers and people, with the honor and exaltation given him by God. Chap. ii. 3, iii. 13. He hesitates not, in the presence of the powerful and venerable council, the wise, learned, and wealthy of the nation, to say fearlessly, “whom ye slew.” There is a blind and reckless animal courage that rushes into the thickest of the battle-field without fear; but we behold in these men of God a courage of a superior, of a moral, kind; a courage derived from the exercise of the highest, not, as in the other case, often from the lowest, principles of human nature.

31, 32. *Exalted with his right hand.* Or, “at his right hand.” Chap. ii. 33. By this is evidently signified, not a local position, but a spiritual state of honor and glory, fitly imaged by the right hand, the post of dignity and acceptance with kings, who thus showed their regard to their favorites.—*To be.* Superfluous words of the translators.—*Prince.* Leader, con-

ductor, as in the way of life and duty. Chap. iii. 15, and note.—*Saviour.* Mat. i. 21. He would bless mankind by turning and saving every one of them from his iniquities. They would then be prepared to follow him, as the leader in the way of life and heaven. Our Lord came to save men, not so much from punishment, — for that they still suffer if they sin, — as from the need of punishment; not so much from the natural consequences of sin, — for they remain the same, — as from sin itself, the greatest evil; not from God, — for he only punishes to reform, — but from themselves, from the perversions and corruptions of their own nature.—*To give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.* Or, “remission of sins.” Luke xxiv. 47. By giving, repentance is here understood the publication of those great facts and truths which would awaken penitence; which would lead even Israel, though stained with the blood of her Messiah, to turn from the evil of her way, and embrace the Christian faith. Jesus was not empowered to create repentance in the sinner, or to bring both Gentiles and Jews to the adoption of his religion, by any arbitrary or mystical influence, or in a mode trenching upon man’s free agency; but by the natural operation of truth upon the human mind, revealing the love of God, his readiness to forgive, and the ingratitude, misery, and ruin of disobedience. We have here, also, the natural order, first repentance, then forgiveness. Such is the promise of God, that they stand in the relation of cause and effect. He that repents is forgiven, because he repents; though he cannot, in all

33 them that obey him. — When they heard *that*, they were cut 34 to the heart, and took counsel to slay them. Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded

instances, repair the evil done. The will is accepted for the deed, and God receives back to his favor the returning prodigal. The coming of our Saviour did not affect the eternal principles of the divine government, the relation of moral causes and effects, but was designed to make them more clearly understood, more vividly felt and heeded, by mankind. — *We are his witnesses of these things.* Luke xxiv. 48; Acts i. 8, ii. 32. An important office of the apostles was to bear testimony to the facts which they had witnessed, of the miracles, teachings, death, resurrection, and ascension of their Master. — *The Holy Ghost*, i. e. according to Beausobre and L'Enfant, “the miraculous gifts which Jesus had bestowed upon his apostles, and which they conferred upon believers.” John v. 37. God had added to the personal testimony of the apostles, the sanction and power of his Holy Spirit; which enabled them to speak with other tongues, work wonders, and by whose instrumentality, in an angelic form, they had just been delivered from a strong and guarded prison. — *Whom.* Should be, “which.” The translators often use “which” for “who” and “whom,” in speaking of persons; but here they have reversed their usual error, and employed “whom” in relation to what is not a person, but a gift, an influence from on high. — *To them that obey him*, i. e. to the apostles and others supernaturally endowed. Obedience to God would seem to be a condition of participation in the gifts of the Spirit.

33. *They were cut to the heart.* The original verb signifies, “to saw through or asunder,” and, in con-

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nexion with the teeth, to “gnash or grate.” The sense here is, that they were enraged, transported with passion, not seized with remorse, as in chap. ii. 37. The fact that the apostles had disobeyed their command, and continued to preach; that, when imprisoned, they had escaped; and that, when arraigned before the ancient and honorable of the land, they had openly charged them with the murder of the Messiah, and proclaimed his resurrection from the dead, and ascension on high, exasperated their passions to the highest degree. — *Took counsel to slay them.* Or, “purposed or determined to put them to death.” No decree was yet passed. As they had effected the death of the Master, they have no compunction or hesitation in following up the same bloody course towards his adherents.

34. *A Pharisee named Gamaliel, &c.* This was a distinguished Jewish doctor of the law, or interpreter of the sacred books. He was the son of Simeon and the grandson of Hillel, also famous Jewish doctors. The exalted title of *Rabban* was bestowed on Gamaliel, as indicative of his great wisdom and reputation. He was at one time president of the Sanhedrim. He was also the instructor of Paul. Chap. xxii. 3. The veneration in which he was held, naturally gave great weight to his counsel in this instance, both among his own sect, the Pharisees, and also with the Sadducees; though his opinions appear to be partly dictated by a secret opposition to the high-priest and his friends, as well as by his profound and judicious wisdom. — *Commanded.* Or, “requested,” or

to put the apostles forth a little space ; and said unto them, Ye 35 men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men : for before these days rose up Theudas, 36 boasting himself to be somebody ; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves : who was slain ; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought.

“directed.”—*To put the apostles forth a little space.* The object was, in chap. iv. 15, that there might be a more free expression of opinion, and that the prisoners might take no advantage or encouragement from what was said.

35, 36. *Take heed to yourselves, &c.* Winer prefers the translation, “Take heed to yourselves, on account of these men, what ye would do, or are about to do.” It has been suggested by Priestley, that Gamaliel might give a more favorable opinion, from the idea that God might be preparing the way to deliver the Jews from the dominion of the Romans, through the wonderful power of the apostles, and that he therefore prudently advises them to do nothing rashly, but await the issue.—*Rose up Theudas.* Josephus, in his Jewish Antiquities, has given a narrative of a certain Theudas, who professed to be a prophet, and drew a great multitude after him, upon the pretext that, if they would follow him to the River Jordan, and carry their goods with them, he would divide the waters by his command, and give them a passage across on dry land. But Cuspius Fadus, then procurator of Judea, despatched some troops against the insurgents, by which many of them were taken, many of them killed, and the head of their leader brought in triumph to Jerusalem. But the Theudas of Josephus raised his rebellion about fourteen years after the time of Gamaliel’s address, and cannot therefore be identified with the Theudas of the text. Various solutions have been proposed for

this difficulty. Josephus may have committed an anachronism or error in time, and assigned the insurrection of Theudas to the period of Cuspius Fadus, when it occurred, in reality, ten or fifteen years before. But the more probable supposition is, that there were two leaders of the same name, which was a very common one among the Jews. As a collateral probability, it is stated in Josephus, that there were no less than four persons of the name of Simon within forty years, and three of the name of Judas within ten years, who were all leaders of rebellions ; and that, before the time of the text, there were, according to Josephus, “innumerable other disorders in Judea,” and the land was “full of robberies.” The comparatively small number connected with the Theudas of Gamaliel rendered him, perhaps, in the far more terrific conflicts of the times, unworthy of the notice of the Jewish historian. To recite all the troubles of that turbulent period, would have been an endless task. The Jews, ardently expecting their Messiah and Deliverer, ill brooked the dominion of the Romans ; and there never were wanting leaders, who could draw together adherents, and, under some political or religious pretext, resist the established government, and wage a sort of predatory warfare upon both countrymen and foreigners. Usher and Pearce meet the difficulty by supposing that Theudas was another name for Judas, whose rebellion Josephus narrates as occurring a little after the death of Herod the Great ;

37 After this man rose up Judas of Galilee, in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; 38 and all, *even* as many as obeyed him, were dispersed. And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for

but the whole is founded on conjecture. Gamaliel adduces the historical precedents of Theudas and Judas in confirmation of his proposition in ver. 38, 39, that if the work in question were of men, it would come to nought; but if of God, it could not be overthrown. — *Boasting himself to be somebody.* Chap. viii. 9. An idiom, meaning that he claimed to be a great leader or prophet, or perhaps the expected Messiah. — *Four hundred.* This was a much smaller number than that which united with several other insurgents of the time. Chap. xxi. 38. — *Obeyed him.* Or, as in the margin, “believed him.”

37. *Judas of Galilee, in the days of the taxing.* After Archelaus, Mat. ii. 22, was deposed from the government, and Judea was reduced to a Roman province, in the reign of Augustus, a census or enrolment, called “taxing” in the text, was taken by Quirinius, or Cyrenius, president of Syria, to which Judea was attached. Josephus says, “that the Jews were at first surprised at the name of a census, but that, by the persuasion of Joazar, the high-priest, they generally acquiesced in it. However, Judas Gaulanitis, associating to himself Sadduc, a Pharisee, excited the people to rebellion; told them that an assessment would introduce downright slavery, and persuaded them to assert their liberty. The people heard their discourses with incredible pleasure. And it is impossible to represent the evils the nation has suffered, which were owing to these men.” In another place, the same writer says, “Judas, the Galilean, was the leader of the fourth sect. In all other points they hold the

same sentiments with the Pharisees. But they have an invincible affection for liberty, and acknowledge God alone their Lord and Governor. From this time the nation became infected with this distemper; and Gessius Florus, by abusing his power when he was president, threw them into despair, and provoked them to rebel against the Romans.” Elsewhere he says that Judas told the people “they had a mean spirit, if they could endure to pay tribute to the Romans, and acknowledge mortal men for their lords, after God had been their King.” Mat. xxii. 17–21; Luke xiii. 1, 2. This revolt was the beginning of difficulties, which were never entirely quieted until the city and nation of the Jews were destroyed in the great war of Titus. Josephus gives no account of the fate of Judas, but it is recorded in the text. His principles, however, were imbibed and carried out by the faction called Zealots, mentioned in the history of the Jewish war. “The taxing,” or enrolment, here spoken of, was subsequent about twelve years to that related in Luke ii. 2. Judas is called, by Josephus, not only the Galilean, as by Gamaliel in the text, but also Gaulanitis, the Gaulanite, as above, because he is said to have been a native of Gamala, a city belonging to Gaulanitis, which was included in Galilee.

38, 39. *And now I say unto you, &c.* Having stated his facts and premises, the speaker proceeds to draw his conclusion, which is, that they should refrain from killing or maltreating the apostles, and let them go on. For if the cause in which they were embarked was of

if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be 39

mere human origin, it would perish without their interference, as did the rebellions before mentioned. But if it was of God, it could not be uprooted; and if they assailed it, they would take the undesirable attitude of contending against God. Prov. xxi. 30; Is. viii. 10. The Jewish doctors have elsewhere recorded similar sentiments; as that "every thing undertaken for God's glory was certain of success;" and that "every association, which was made in the name of God, would stand; but that which was not for the honor of God would fall." Neander remarks that "too much has been attributed to these words of Gamaliel, when it has been inferred from them that he was a secret adherent of the gospel; the connexion he kept up with the Jewish schools of theology precludes such a supposition. By the traditions of the Gemara, we are justified in considering him as one of the free thinking Jewish theologians, which we also learn from his being in favor of the cultivation of Græcan literature; and from his peculiar mental constitution, we might likewise infer, that he would be more easily moved by an impression of the divine, even in appearances, which did not bear the stamp of his party. On the one hand, he had a clear perception of the fact, that all fanatical movements are generally rendered more violent by opposition, and that what in itself is insignificant, is often raised into importance by forcible attempts to suppress it. On the other hand, the manner in which the apostles spoke and acted made some impression on a man not wholly prejudiced; while their exact observance of the law, and hostile attitude towards Sadduceeism, must have disposed him more strongly in

their favor, and hence the thought might arise in his mind that, after all, there was something divine in the cause they advocated." It is said that Gamaliel died, as he had lived, a Pharisee, about twenty years after the events here recorded, and there was great lamentation at his death. Onkelos, the Targumist, is said to have burnt seventy pounds of incense at his funeral. The Mishna affirmed that, when "Rabban Gamaliel died, the glory of the law ceased; and purity and Pharisaism expired." — *This council or this work*, i. e. of the gospel; the plan, and the effort to realize the plan, of Christ.

We may surely be allowed to argue with the weapons of logic, which the enemies of Christianity have themselves put into our hands. Since the gospel has not been overthrown, but has gone on conquering and to conquer, from age to age, and was never so great a power as at this day, we infer, conversely to the proposition of Gamaliel, that it is of God, and never can be overthrown. It is true, that false systems of religion have spread far and wide, and flourished long in the earth. But they have often relied upon the sword for their extension and perpetuity. They have, too, made a compromise with the passions, and not demanded the pure morals of the Christian system. They have also fallen into perversions and corruptions, from which they could not recover, being destitute of the conservative and self-recuperative energy of the gospel. Our holy faith has been attacked by every species of foe, open and concealed; by the arm of the persecutor, and the argument of the philosopher; by the doubts of the ignorant, and the sneers of the witty. But it has come

40 found even to fight against God. — And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, 41 and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame 42 for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

forth brighter and purer from every furnace, in which it has been tried. It still lives; it prevails by moral suasion; it fills the world. Cities and empires rise and fall, but this kingdom endureth throughout all generations. Napoleon Bonaparte remarked, in a conversation related by his friend Count de Montholon, “Alexander, Cæsar, Charlemagne, and myself, founded empires; but on what foundation did we rest the creations of our genius? Upon *force*. Jesus Christ alone founded his empire upon *love*; and at this hour millions of men would die for him. His eternal kingdom is proclaimed, loved, and adored, and is extending over the whole earth.”

40. *To him they agreed*, i. e. in part. They did not wholly refrain from maltreating the apostles, but concluded not to put them to death, according to their original intentions. Ver. 33. — *Beaten them*. The original word signifies to flay, but the sense here is to scourge, or beat with rods or thongs — a cruel and deeply ignominious punishment, to which our Saviour himself had been subjected. Mat. xxvii. 26. The usual number of lashes was thirty-nine. 2 Cor. xi. 24. The apostles were now suffering what had been predicted in Mat. x. 17. This infliction of pain gave vent, as it were, to the malice of the elders and priests. They perhaps feared, too, that their authority might be despised by others, if the apostles went entirely free, after they had been forbidden to preach the gospel,

and had once escaped from prison. — *Should not speak in the name of Jesus*, i. e. preach the gospel, or work miracles, which were both done in that sacred name. The same prohibition had been before enjoined upon them in vain. Chap. iv. 17, 18, 21.

41, 42. *The council*. Comprising, as it would seem, the Sanhedrim and others called in on the occasion. — *Rejoicing that they were accounted worthy, &c.* Though they had been most ignominiously treated, they accounted it no disgrace, but an honor, to suffer in so great a cause; for they were partakers of similar sufferings as their Master before them. Phil. iii. 10; Col. i. 24; 1 Pet. iv. 13. —

*In every house*. Or, “from house to house,” for such is the idiom of the Greek. Instead of damping their courage, their trials enkindled new zeal in the diffusion of truth. Instead of obeying men, they betook themselves with new fidelity and interest to obeying God. — *Teach and preach*. The one referring, probably, to their public labors, the other to their private instructions; the one to what they did in the temple, the other to what they did from house to house. — *Jesus Christ*, i. e. according to the best translators, they preached Jesus the Christ, or that Jesus is the Christ, or Messiah. Thus triumphantly closes this new record of the persecution of the apostles. The whole narration is luminous with truth and reality, and cannot but leave a deep impression

## CHAPTER VI.

*The Appointment of Seven Deacons, and the Persecution of Stephen.*

AND in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily min-

upon every unprejudiced reader of the divine origin and authority of the gospel.

The following remarks in relation to the case of Ananias, and also the opinion of Gamaliel, are by Kenrick. “1. How could Peter have had the effrontery to reprove Ananias for uttering a lie, if he himself had been at the same time publishing a more flagrant lie, in reporting the resurrection of his Master, and in asserting his own claim to a divine commission? How could God, the impartial Judge of all the earth, punish the less offender with so much severity, and let the greater go free? Or how could men, with such dreadful examples before their eyes, persist in a notorious fraud? To such questions as these, let the enemies of our faith, if they are able, reply.”

2. “Happy would it have been for the Jews, happy would it have been for Christians, if they had always been attentive to the maxims of this wise teacher! How much innocent blood would have been spared! how much human misery prevented! But, alas, it seems as if the bulk of mankind had yet to learn what history and observation have always taught the enlightened,—the folly and wickedness of persecution.”

## CHAPTER VI.

1. *In those days.* An indefinite expression, implying that it was not long after the events related in the preceding chapter. The chronology of the Acts is ascertained in only a few points with any degree of cer-

tainty.—*Was multiplied.* Greater numbers naturally opened more room for jealousies and difficulties. The obstacles in the way of a community of goods, even to the small extent practised in the early church,—much more in the entire relinquishment of all individual property to a general stock,—were apparent very soon, notwithstanding the wisdom and justice of the apostles, and those who probably took the lead in this business.—*The Grecians against the Hebrews.* Two parties were formed, consisting of two different classes of the disciples. By the Grecians, or, literally, Hellenists, it has been contended by Lightfoot and many others, that Luke means the Grecian, or Grecised Jews,—foreign Jews,—such as were Jews by their religion, though they were Grecian or Gentiles by their country and language, who had now come to Jerusalem. On the other hand, Lardner and other learned men, hold that “the Grecians” were proselytes to the Jewish religion, who were originally Gentiles by birth, religion, and language. It is needless to state the various reasons on both sides. But there is a third opinion, supported, in full or in part, by the authority of Kuinoel, Norton, Robinson, Milman, Olshausen, and Ripley, which is entitled to more consideration than either of the above interpretations. It is, that both foreign Jews and Gentile proselytes to Judaism, whether converted to Christianity or not, were included in the term. For, since both classes existed, and both probably had representatives in the

2 istration. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the 3 word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost

primitive church, it is probable that they were put together under one head; and if either was excluded, it was left without a designation. Again, as some, like Timothy, were of Gentile origin on one side, and Jewish on the other, chap. xvi. 1, it was necessary to have a word that would not be inappropriate to both Jewish residents abroad, and Gentile proselytes. And, finally, we learn, from the subsequent history, ver. 5, that one of the officers to rectify abuses, was a proselyte to Judaism; while the silence observed respecting the others, in conjunction with their Grecian names, favors the idea that they were part, or all, foreign Jews, using the Greek language. By "the Hebrews" is meant genuine Jews in all respects. Gen. xiv. 13. — *Their widows were neglected.* Particular regard was generally paid, in the early church, to the relief of this class of the afflicted, and often the destitute. 1 Tim. v. 3, 9, 10, 16; James i. 27. The text says that the widows of the Grecians, or Hellenists, were neglected, or overlooked, or passed by. Partiality was shown in the distribution of the general fund of relief, or what is called the "daily ministration." See chap. iv. 35. As the native Jews constituted the largest and most important party in the new association, and felt a superiority to foreign Jews and proselytes, on account of their living in the Holy Land, their birth, education, and language; it was not unnatural that even Christian principles and benevolence should not at once make them impartial, in their treatment of those whom they had been accustomed to look down upon as inferiors. We

witness here the generous, equalizing spirit of Christianity, already commencing its attack upon the distinctions of classes, and parties, and castes, and proclaiming the great truth of **HUMAN BROTHERHOOD**.

2. *The twelve.* Now complete by the choice of Matthias. Chap. i. 26.

— *The multitude of the disciples.* By this is not meant all the converts at Jerusalem, but a large assembly of those most interested in the affair. —

*It is not reason.* Or, "reasonable," or it is not agreeable or proper. — *Leave the word of God,* i. e. leave preaching the word of God, or neglect the peculiar and important duties of apostles. Their first high office was to bear witness to the history of Jesus, and proclaim the word of God, revealed by him, and confirmed by the Holy Spirit. It would not be proper or right to turn aside from this great mission to the spiritual wants of the world, and to be distracted by inferior, though useful and necessary, occupations. — *Serve tables.* As "tables" were used by the exchangers of money, Mat. xxi. 12, at which they sat in the markets or public places, the phrase is used to describe, figuratively, an attention to money matters, or to secular affairs in general. The apostles were set apart for higher concerns, and should not be expected to take care of the collection and distribution of the general fund for the relief of widows and the poor. Other persons could more appropriately perform these duties. Chap. iv. 34, 35, 37, v. 2, 8.

3, 4. *Look ye out among you.* We see here the power of choosing the officers accorded to the assembly or

and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we <sup>4</sup> will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and <sup>5</sup> they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Par-

church. The apostles did not dictate what selection should be made, but referred the matter to those who would be interested in the appointment. None of the arrogance, none of the inordinate love of power, which have, in succeeding times, wrought such boundless mischief in the church, were here exhibited.—*Seven men.* This number possessed a sacredness to a Jewish mind, which may have had its weight on the present occasion.—*Of honest report.* In the original, a participle,—"testified, well accredited," as full of the Holy Spirit.—*Holy Ghost and wisdom.* It is the unanimous voice of critics that the sense is, "men well reported for their Christian excellencies and gifts, and their worldly prudence in managing such affairs as would come more specially under their jurisdiction."—*Whom we may appoint.* Rather, "Whom we may place or ordain," for the appointment was by the people, not the apostles: and the latter were simply to perform the act of consecration to the office, as they did in ver. 6.—*Over this business,* i. e. of "the daily ministration," or the distribution to every person, as he had need. Chap. iv. 35.—*Give yourselves continually.* Or, literally, "persevere in," or "be continually engaged in." The mighty work in which they were employed, required their untiring devotion and perseverance. They could allow nothing to compete, for a moment, with their peculiar apostolic duties.—*To prayer.* By which some understand the exercises of meditation and supplication in general, and not the mere act of

prayer. Nothing is more essential to a preacher of the word of God, than an habitual and prayerful communion with the Spirit of God. Unceasing devotion can alone give a vivid sense of the reality of spiritual things, and establish deep and living convictions of the wants of the soul, and the rich supplies from the fountain of all.—*The ministry of the word.* Or, "service of the word." They were to "serve" the word, not tables. Ver. 2. This clause refers rather to their public duties as preachers of the gospel, which, in that age, destitute of the art of printing, and in every age, notwithstanding the multiplication of books, must be the grand instrument for diffusing Christian truth, and quickening the moral energies of mankind. The living voice, and the presence of the living soul, give an uncalculated power to the administration of the gospel over the masses of society, which would be sought in vain in the utmost influence of written books and printed eloquence.

5, 6. *The saying pleased, &c.* It was customary, among the Jews, for three persons to be appointed by each synagogue, to oversee the secular concerns of the body, and to provide for the poor. Hence the proposition of the apostles would coincide, in some measure, with their former usages, and prove the more acceptable.—*They chose.* Observe that the choice rests exclusively with the people at large.—*Stephen, a man full, &c.* Little is known of this disciple, except what is related in this and the following chapter. He is chiefly distinguished as the proto-

6 menas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch, whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid *their* hands on

martyr, or the first Christian who was put to death for his faith. Chap. vii. His abilities and gifts, both native and conferred, were ample, and he appears to have caught a glimpse, even earlier than others, of that great mystery or secret of the kingdom of Christ, that it was to be thrown open to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews. Hence he has been called the forerunner of Paul.—*Philip.* He, like Stephen, not only discharged the secular duties of his station, but preached the gospel. His history is wrapped in darkness, except some notices respecting his labors in chap. viii., and his family in chap. xxi. 8, 9. Of the remaining five, nothing is known with certainty. Their single honor was to have their names inscribed in this book of life.—*Nicolas a proselyte*, i. e. a convert to the Jewish religion. The reference is not to his conversion to Christianity. Some of the ancients identified him as the founder of the sect of heretics called Nicolaitanes in Rev. ii. 6, 15; but no credit is to be attached to the conjecture. The fact that he was a proselyte, indicates that proselytes were included in the term *Hellenists*, ver. 1, and since most of the seven names are Greek or Gentile, it is probable that it included also foreign Jews. The officers appointed appear to belong principally to the party of complainants, and they would therefore be better able to redress the wrongs of the neglected, and more acquainted with their wants.—*Of Antioch.* This splendid city was situated in Syria, on the River Orontes. It was built by Seleucus Nicanor, one of the kings of that country, and called Antioch after his father, Antiochus. It was the seat of belles-lettres and the fine arts, and was reckoned, at

one period, as the third city in the Roman provinces. Here the disciples first received the appellation of *Christians*. Chap. xi. 26. Antioch has been subject in all periods to the terrible devastations of wars and earthquakes, and little at present remains of its former splendor but ruins. It is now under the dominion of the sultan of Turkey, and is called *Antakia*.—*Whom they set before the apostles.* The congregation of disciples chose the proposed officers, and set them before the apostles to be consecrated to their work.—*Prayed—laid their hands on them.* This act of consecration consisted of prayer and the imposition of hands; by which it would appear, not that any authority was given, or any gift of the Holy Spirit communicated; but that these solemn services were performed for their moral and spiritual influence upon the minds of all concerned. The custom of placing the hands upon persons when set apart to an office, or when a blessing was invoked upon them, is often introduced in the Bible. Gen. xlvi. 14, 18; Num. xxvii. 18, 23; Mat. ix. 18; Mark vi. 5, xvi. 18; Acts viii. 17; 1 Tim. iv. 14, v. 22; 2 Tim. i. 6. So, at the present day, the placing of the hands upon the head of one set apart for the gospel ministry should not be deemed as a mystical act, conveying any hidden virtue, or conferring any positive authority, so much as an emblem of consecration, and a blessing supplicated upon the individual from God. That appears to have been, at least in this case, the extent of the virtue of the laying on of hands even by the apostles themselves; how much more truly is this the case with their fallible successors in the ministry of reconciliation!

them. — And the word of God increased; and the number of 7 the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and 8

The individuals appointed and set apart above are usually called *deacons*, from the Greek word “to serve,” ver. 2; and the duties of those thus designated among us somewhat resemble the office of the seven in the text, in their oversight of the temporals of the church. But it is utterly in vain to draw, as many sects of Christians attempt to do, precedents for one or another form of ecclesiastical organization and government, from these early usages of the Christian church. The regulations then adopted sprang up with the exigencies of the times, like the growth of Nature herself. There was no rigid system, no formal arrangements. The spiritual life of the believers took such outward forms as were needful to express and cherish itself; but there was no forcing, no iron bed of uniformity. If a particular mode of government, gradation of officers, and fabric of laws and rules, were essential to the existence and prosperity of the church, we should have naturally looked for them in the Acts of the Apostles. Since we do not find them here; since as many inferences can be drawn from apostolic usages, and plausibly, too, in some measure, as there are modes of church government in the world; we cannot but come to the irresistible conclusion that the more simple, natural, and well adapted to human wants, any modes are, the more nearly they correspond in spirit, if not in letter, to the administration of the primitive and apostolic age.

7. *The word of God increased, &c.* Or, “throve,” or, “grew.” The sense of course is, that the knowledge of the gospel was more diffused and wel-

comed. The settlement of the difficulties in the church would naturally lead to new zeal and coöperation, and a greater extension of the truth. Persecution and trouble only served, as we learn from the history, to call forth new virtues and new successes. All worked together for good to the infant cause. — *A great company of the priests.* This was very remarkable, as the priests had hitherto proved the greatest opponents to the gospel. They were the most forward in the persecution and crucifixion of Jesus, and manifested the same unrelenting malignity towards his apostles and disciples. Their connexion with the religion of Moses, and their interest in the perpetuity of its services and rites, inclined their minds, independently of those considerations which affected the people at large, to view with aversion and distrust the new faith; which they ignorantly supposed was the subversion, not the fulfilment and carrying out, of the religion of their fathers. When the onward progress of the word of God had therefore prevailed over many of this unpromising class, and their important influence was gained, it was an item worthy of record. — *Obedient to the faith.* Or, to Christianity; for faith is so large and essential an element in its composition, that it is sometimes put for the whole. — We learn from Ezra ii. 36 — 40, that the whole number of priests was large, and Josephus, against Appion, speaks of twenty thousand at that day.

8. *Stephen, full of faith and power.* Or, according to the reading admitted by Griesbach, “full of grace and power,” i. e. divine favor and the

9 miracles among the people. Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called *the synagogue* of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia, and of Asia,

power of working miracles. Ver. 5. The narrative of the appointment of seven deacons naturally introduces the history of Stephen, the most distinguished of them, whose martyrdom is hereafter related. Chap. vii. *Wonders and miracles.* Hebraism for "miracles" simply, or, "wonderful works."

9. *The synagogue.* The number of synagogues, or Jewish places of worship, was very great in Jerusalem, and variously recorded by the Talmuds as being between four and five hundred. As Jews from every part of the then known world resorted to the holy city at the festivals, they had synagogues for their own use, designated by the names of the countries from which they came; and in them the Greek language, to which they were habituated, was used, and their particular wants more regarded. According to some authors, the various classes here enumerated constituted one party, with a synagogue in common; but the better view is, that the Jews from each nation had their peculiar place of worship; one belonging to the Cyrenians, and another to the Cilicians, &c. — *Libertines.* Some difference of opinion has existed respecting this class, whether they took their name from their country, or from their civil condition. Several critics contend that they belong to a place in Africa called Libertum, or Libertina, near Carthage, and cite the mention of such a place from ancient writers and the records of councils. The fact that the name is introduced in connexion with the Cyrenians and Alexandrians is also affirmed as a collateral probability. But much uncertainty rests upon the existence and location of such a

place. Hence most incline to the other principal opinion, that the Libertines were so called from their condition. The term is a Latin word, expressed in Greek letters. Roman slaves who had obtained their freedom were called *liberti*, freedmen, and their posterity, *libertini*, the children of freedmen. Many Jews had been taken captive in war at various times, and, after being carried to Italy, were made free by their Roman masters. Philo states that one portion of Rome was inhabited by this class of persons. But several years before the period spoken of in the text, Tiberius, the Roman emperor, resolved, to use the language of Tacitus, "to expel the Egyptian and Jewish rites. And a decree of the senate was passed that four thousand of the *Libertine* race, infected with that superstition, and who were of a fit age, should be transported into the Island of Sardinia; and that the rest should depart from Italy within a time limited, unless they renounced their profane rites." Josephus and Suetonius corroborate the same statement, and expressly call the *Libertine* race Jews. As these freedmen, whether Jews or proselytes to the Jewish religion, were very numerous, it is not improbable that they are spoken of in the text, as having a synagogue in Jerusalem. The Talmuds often speak of the synagogue of the *Libertines*, or those made free, and of the synagogue of the *Alexandrians*. — *Cyrenians.* See note on chap. ii. 10. — *Alexandrians.* Inhabitants of Alexandria, a city of Egypt, situated on the Nile, built by Alexander the Great, in the fourth century before Christ, and originally peopled by colonies of Greeks and Jews. At

disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to resist the 10 wisdom and the spirit by which he spake. Then they suborned 11 men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words

one period, it was second only to Rome, distinguished for its immense size, the magnificence of its buildings, its vast commerce, and schools of science and literature. It was the great mart of intercourse between the eastern and western world. The Jews were so numerous here, that Philo, a contemporary with Christ, states that they inhabited two fifths of the city. It was here that the Septuagint, or version of the Seventy, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, was made. Christian as well as Jewish schools long flourished at Alexandria, until it was conquered by the Muhammedans in the seventh century; and it has since continued under their dominion. — *Cilicia*. This was a province of Asia Minor, bounded south by the Mediterranean Sea, east by Syria, north and west by Cappadocia, Lycaonia, Isauria, and Pamphylia. Paul was a native of Tarsus, the chief city in this country, and was perhaps connected with the synagogue of the Cilicians, and engaged in the controversy with Stephen, for we learn, from chap. vii. 58, viii. 1, xxii. 20, that he was present at his death, and kept the clothes of the witnesses. — *Asia*. See note on chap. ii. 9. — *Disputing*. Or, “questioning,” or, “reasoning with.”

10. *Not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit, &c.* As Stephen was supernaturally gifted with a spirit of wisdom, apart from his superior native abilities, the Jews were wholly unable to confute him with the weapons of reason; and hence, in their passion, they resorted to the blind argument of force. By thus shifting the mode of attack, they confessed their inferiority, and yielded him the palm of truth.

11. *Suborned*, i. e. they secretly procured men, who would take a false oath, or perjure themselves. Mat. xxvi. 59, 60, 61. The method of procedure very much resembled that pursued towards the Master. They procured witnesses not to fabricate utter falsehoods, but to put a false construction upon what was really said. Comp. Mat. xxvi. 61, with John ii. 19–21. — *Blasphemous words against Moses and against God*. Stephen saw that the gospel was the completion of the law, that Jesus was to supersede Moses; and he probably said what he believed on the subject. He wished to convince his countrymen that, in becoming the followers of the Messiah, they were carrying out the very scheme which Moses commenced, and most truly honoring that great lawgiver. Hence Neander observes that, by the witnesses being called *false*, it does not follow that all they said was a fabrication, but only that they had, on many points, distorted the assertion of Stephen, with an evil intention. It was far from his design to attack the divine origin and holiness of the law, or blaspheme Moses. Ver. 13, 14. But he probably represented the religion of the Jews as an arrangement for the time being, and as eventually falling before the grand movement of higher and more spiritual truths. The slightest hint of that kind would, of course, be caught up and magnified into the gravest crime. His case in this respect resembled that of his Master. He was charged with blasphemy, the capital crime, which, in a theocracy like Judaism, was not only a religious, but a political, offence, treason against God the King, as well as impiety to the Most High,

12 against Moses, and *against God*. And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon *him*, and 13 caught him, and brought *him* to the council, and set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law: for we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us. 15 And all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

and punishable with death. See Lev. xxiv. 16; Deut. xiii. 10. The above view helps to explain the bearing of the address of Stephen in chap. vii.

12. *They stirred up the people*, i. e. the foreign Jews of ver. 9, with whom Stephen, as being probably a Hellenist, ver. 1, 5, was more immediately connected, excited the people at large, as well as the scribes and priests, against him. The necessity of making their victim odious in the popular view, if they would succeed in their persecution, was apparent from the favor with which the people regarded the Christian cause. Chap. ii. 47, iv. 21, v. 26. — *Came upon him*, i. e. violently. — *Council*. The Sanhedrim.

13. *Set up false witnesses*, i. e. those whom they had prepared beforehand. They were false, inasmuch as they maliciously misrepresented what Stephen had said, and mingled truth and falsehood in their statement. — *This holy place*, i. e. the temple, or, as some think, the holy city. — *The law*. The law of Moses; which the Jews made a kind of idol, ignorant that it was not an end, but a means to something higher.

14. *Shall destroy this place*. The old charge, seemingly copied from John ii. 19–21; Mat. xxvi. 61. — *Change the customs, &c.* Or, abrogate the Mosaic ritual of sacrifices and ceremonies. It is unlikely that Stephen made any direct assertions

of this kind, for the disciples had hardly risen yet into the comprehensive view of the relations between the law and the gospel; but he might use expressions which they tortured into these offensive words.

15. *Looking steadfastly on him*. His appearance was such as to attract their attention. — *Saw his face as it had been the face of an angel*, i. e. beaming with a shining, glorified expression, such as angels were supposed to wear. Gen. xxxiii. 10; 2 Sam. xiv. 17, xix. 27. Instances of the same proverbial phrase occur in the Jewish Talmuds. It is not to be inferred that there was any thing miraculous here, but that Stephen manifested such a heavenly repose and dignity before his infuriated enemies, that he seemed like an angel. So far from any embarrassment, as of guilt and imposture, being witnessed in his deportment, he met his judges with the look of assured innocence and radiant serenity, as well as of immovable fortitude.

We learn from this chapter that prosperity brings its troubles: when the disciples were increased, a murmuring arose, ver. 1; that every one should fulfil his own part in the Christian brotherhood, some preach the word, some "serve tables," ver. 2; that trials well borne result in greater good, ver. 7; that "the voice of the people" is not always "the voice of God," especially when they are under the guidance of interested and

## CHAPTER VII.

*The Defence and Martyrdom of Stephen.*

THEN said the high-priest, Are these things so? And he said, 2 Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, and said unto him, Get thee out of thy 3 country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I

corrupt leaders, ver. 12; that true religion is eminently fitted to produce serenity and self-possession in the midst of the most appalling dangers, and to change the natural look of horror into an angelic sweetness and composure, ver. 15; and that all the powers of men in vain league themselves together to overcome the cause of God. One true heart is mightier than all the hosts of evil.

## CHAPTER VII.

1. *The high-priest.* Who was, *ex officio*, president of the Sanhedrim.—*Are these things so?* i. e. he puts Stephen upon his defence, and inquires whether it was true, according to the charge, chap. vi. 11, 13, 14, that he had blasphemed God and Moses, the holy place and the law, and predicted the destruction of the temple and the abrogation of the Jewish worship.

2. *Men, brethren.* A Hebrew idiom, which should be rendered simply “brethren,” referring to his equals in age, or to the people at large.—*Fathers.* Or, “elders,” members of the Sanhedrim.—*The God of glory.* Or, to drop the Hebraism, “the glorious God.” By the use of this term, Stephen expresses his veneration, and virtually repels the charge of blasphemy. Chap. vi. 11.—*Our father Abraham.* The Jews thus designated their illustrious ancestor. The address of Stephen consists of a detail of Jewish history, from the time of Abraham to Solomon. Its bearings upon the accusation brought

against him will be pointed out at the close of the chapter.—*Mesopotamia.* See note on chap. ii. 9. Chaldea, in which Abraham is in some passages said to dwell, was sometimes used also to include Mesopotamia, on which it bordered. According to Gen. xi. 28, 29, xii. 1, compared with Gen. xxiv. 10, Abraham and his relatives are represented as living in Mesopotamia.—*Charran.* Called, in the Old Testament, *Haran*, a city in the northern part of Mesopotamia, a place where Terah and his son Abraham abode for a season, before the latter was called to Canaan. It afterwards went under the name of *Carrae*, and was the scene of the overthrow and death of Crassus, the Roman general, in his war against the Parthians. Abraham is represented in the text as favored by a divine revelation, before he came to Charran; but in the history in Genesis, he seems to be first addressed when at this place, though there is no express disclaimer of previous communications. It has been conjectured, by some interpreters, that Stephen followed, here and elsewhere in his speech, the tradition, rather than the recorded, account; for the Talmuds and Philo speak of God appearing to Abraham first in Chaldea, and afterwards in Charran, and even some passages of Scripture favor this idea. Gen. xv. 7; Neh. ix. 7.

3. *And said unto him*, i. e. in Mesopotamia, or what is called in Gen-

4 shall show thee. Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Charran. And from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land wherein ye now dwell. 5 And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not *so much as* to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when *as yet* he had no 6 child. And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into

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esis, *Ur of the Chaldees*, and not at the time spoken of in Gen. xii. 1, when he dwelt in Charran.—*Get thee out of thy country, &c.* This command was given to rescue Abraham from idolatry, and to make him the head of a new race, who should worship the one true God, and be the depositary of a new religion for the world.

4. *Land of the Chaldeans*, i. e. Mesopotamia. Ver. 2.—*Dwelt in Charran.* His residence here is only temporary, and, although it was in the aforenamed country from which he was said to *come out*, yet the expression was used because he was on his way out of that land.—*When his father was dead.* Here is a difficulty in chronology; for, by computations of the age of Terah, the father of Abraham, and the period when the latter removed from Charran to Canaan, made from Gen. xi. 26, 32, xii. 4, it would appear that Terah was still living when his son emigrated to Canaan. Many solutions have been proposed, as that Terah was morally dead when his son left him, being an idolater; that the Samaritan text should be preferred, which reads one hundred and five instead of the present number, Gen. xi. 32; for errors in numerical statements are frequent; that Abraham was not necessarily born when Terah was seventy years of age, but might have been the youngest of the sons, though mentioned first on account of his distinction, and might

have been born long after the age of Terah there mentioned; but the more probable explanation is that of Bloomfield and others, that Stephen followed, here and elsewhere, the traditions of his countrymen, which were well known to his auditors, though somewhat at variance with the recorded history.—*He removed him*, i. e. God.—*Into this land*, i. e. Canaan.

5. *Not so much as to set his foot on.* Or, to use our term, “not a foot of land.” Lightfoot remarks “that Abraham was forced to buy, Gen. xxiii., a place of burial, though all the land was given him by promise.” He was himself a pilgrim and sojourner, but he rested with undoubting faith on the promises of God, and hence became “the father of the faithful.” Gen. xii. 7.—*He had no child.* A circumstance placing in greater prominence his invincible trust in the divine covenant.

6. *Should sojourn in a strange land.* By which is meant the abode of the Hebrews in Egypt.—*Entreat.* Old English for “treat.”—*Four hundred years.* Gen. xv. 13. This is a statement in round numbers of the duration, both of the Egyptian bondage, and of the preceding abode of the patriarchs in the land of Canaan, which, exactly computed, would amount to about four hundred and thirty years, the same as stated in Ex. xii. 40, 41, Gal. iii. 17, and by Josephus in his history. The patriarchs dwelt in Canaan about two hundred years previously

bondage, and entreat *them* evil four hundred years. And the 7 nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place. — And he gave him the covenant of circumcision. And 8 so *Abraham* begat *Isaac*, and circumcised him the eighth day; and *Isaac* begat *Jacob*, and *Jacob* begat the twelve patriarchs. And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold *Joseph* into Egypt: but 9 God was with him, and delivered him out of all his afflictions, and 10 gave him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt, and all his house. Now 11 there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction; and our fathers found no sustenance. But when 12 *Jacob* heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first. And at the second time *Joseph* was made known to his 13

to the emigration into Egypt, where their posterity remained in servitude during two hundred years longer.

7. *Will I judge.* Or, better, “punish;” which prediction was fearfully fulfilled by the plagues related in Exodus, and the overthrow of the Egyptians in the Red Sea. Indeed, the accuracy with which all these various prophecies were accomplished, furnishes an irresistible argument in support of the divine authority of the Mosaic dispensation. — *Serve me in this place*, i. e. the descendants of *Abraham* would serve and worship God in the land of Canaan. Compare Gen. xv. 14; Ex. iii. 12. This was the great aim of the Jewish revelation — that the nation, after a long discipline of toils, and sufferings, and teachings, should be established, in the land of Canaan, in the pure worship of the one God; and thus become an instrument, diffusing abroad that fundamental doctrine in all the earth, and preparing the way for more advanced revelations of spiritual truth.

8. *The covenant of circumcision.* Gen. xvii. 4–10. Circumcision was the token of the covenant, which God made with *Abraham* and his

posterity. This covenant or compact consisted of a promise from God that he would be their God, and an agreement, which was ratified by the rite of circumcision on their part, that they would be his people. — *And so, &c.* i. e. “in virtue,” according to Bloomfield, of that covenant. — *The twelve patriarchs.* So called because they were the heads of the twelve Jewish tribes.

9. *Moved with envy.* Gen. xxxvii. 4, 11, 28. They were jealous of the favor with which their father treated his youngest son. — *But God was with him.* Notwithstanding he was deserted by those most nearly connected by the ties of kindred, and sold into a foreign land as a common slave, he was under the guidance and protection of that higher Power “who shapes our ends, rough hew them as we will.” Gen. xxxix. 2, 21, 23, xlv. 7, 8.

10. *Delivered him, &c.* Gen. xli. *Joseph* was wonderfully preserved and elevated to power for the good of his family and nation.

11–13. See Gen. xli. – xlv. — *A dearth.* Famines were more frequent in the early ages, before the arts of agriculture were improved, or the fa-

brethren : and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh. 14 Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to *him*, and all his 15 kindred, threescore and fifteen souls. So Jacob went down into 16 Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers, and were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor, *the father of Sychem.* —

cilities of commerce established between different nations. — *Great affliction.* The natural consequence of the severe famine. The story of Joseph and his brethren is one of the most beautiful and life-like histories in the literature of the world. — *No sustenance.* Not even of a coarser kind, as the word in the original implies. — *Corn*, i. e. grain of any species, as maize, wheat. — *Joseph was made known.* Or, made himself known.

14. *Threescore and fifteen souls.* This number conflicts with Gen. xlvi. 26, 27; Ex. i. 5; Deut. x. 22, where Jacob and his posterity are said to be seventy, at the time of the emigration into Egypt. The Septuagint version, however, records seventy-five, in harmony with the present text. To make out this number, some would include the wives of Jacob's sons; but the better explanation is found in the fact that the descendants of Joseph, though not emigrants from Canaan, belonged to the sum total of Jacob's posterity, and are so recorded by the Septuagint in Gen. xlvi. 27, where, instead of the number two, in Hebrew it reads nine, i. e. Joseph and his wife, their two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, and their five grandsons, mentioned in 1 Chron. vii. 14–21, Ashriel, Machir, Zelophehad, Peresh, sons of Manasseh; and Shuthelah, son of Ephraim. Stephen perhaps intimates the vast growth of the nation from such small beginnings, as an implied justification of the feebleness of the Christian cause at first.

15, 16. *So Jacob went down, &c.* Compare Gen. xlvi. — *Were carried over into Sychem.* Elsewhere called *Shechem*, and *Sychar*, a city of Samaria. Josh. xxiv. 32; John iv. 5. Its present name is *Nabulus*. Josephus, in his *Antiquities*, represents the brethren of Joseph to have been buried at Hebron; but the Jewish Rabbins, and also Jerome, agree with Stephen, in assigning Shechem as their burial-place. — *That Abraham bought, &c.* Contrary to this statement, we are informed in Gen. xxiii. that Abraham bought the cave and field of Ephron the Hittite, which was in *Machpelah*, before Mamre; whereas the bargain with the sons of Emmor, the father of Sichem, was made by Jacob. Gen. xxxiii. 18, 19. To account for this error, some critics concur in the opinion that *Abraham* was introduced by some transcriber without authority, and that the true nominative is *he*, referring to Jacob in ver. 15, who is last mentioned. But the Abbotts, in their notes on the New Testament, remark that "This is another of the instances in which Stephen's account appears not to correspond with the Mosaic history, and of which no satisfactory explanation has yet been given. The necessity of finding such explanation depends upon the question, whether we consider this address of Stephen as divinely inspired. The sacred writers often record the discourses of uninspired men." See, also, Barnes on this verse to the same effect. — *Emmor.* In Hebrew, *Hamor*. Gen. xxxiv. 18.

But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had 17 sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt, till 18 another king arose, which knew not Joseph. The same dealt 19 subtly with our kindred, and evil-entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live. — In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding 20 fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months: and 21 when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and 22 nourished him for her own son. And Moses was learned in all

17–19. *The time of the promise*, i. e. fulfilment of the promise, that they should be released from bondage, and enter into the inheritance of Canaan, the promised land. Gen. xii. 7, xv. 14, 16. — *Grew and multiplied*. See Ex. i. 7–12. — *Another king arose*. His name is only matter of conjecture. — *Knew not Joseph*. Ex. i. 8. The probable sense is, “did not care for him,” or “regarded not the memory of his benefits.” Joseph at this time was dead, but the reigning monarch did not remember his service to the country, and continue to his kindred the favors enjoyed under the previous reign. — *Dealt subtly*, i. e. insidiously, deceitfully, Ex. i. 10, “wisely,” in a bad sense. — *So that they cast out, &c.* Besides expressly ordering the death of the male children, Ex. i. 16, 18, 22, the policy of the cruel monarch was, to grind the Israelites with so severe a bondage, that they would prefer to abandon their children to destruction, rather than see them live to be the most abject slaves. — *They might not live*, i. e. the young children. The custom of infanticide is one of the marks of the lowest condition of humanity, among savage and barbarous nations. Life is held so cheap, and is so wretched, that the parents choose death for their offspring, as the more desirable lot. In some Eastern tribes, birth is an occasion of lamentation, and death of “joy and festivity.

20, 21. *Was exceeding fair*. Literally, “fair to God.” As the Hebrews had no superlative degree for their adjectives, they attached to them the word *God* to give intensity of meaning. Thus, very high mountains were called the mountains of God, Ps. xxxvi. 6; lofty cedars, the cedars of God, Ps. lxxx. 10; a vehement flame, a flame of God, Cant. viii. 6; a very great city, a city of God, Jon. iii. 3. See, also, 2 Cor. x. 4. The idea would seem to be, what was great, or beautiful, or lofty, even before God, who truly knows what possesses these qualities. We employ the words “divine” and “divinely” to heighten the force of our expressions. Heb. xi. 23. Josephus also calls Moses “a youth of divine beauty;” and, in another place, says, “No one could look at him without being struck with his beauty, and unable to take his eyes off from him.” — *In his father's house three months*. He was secretly preserved during that time, Ex. ii. 2, 3; and, when concealment was no longer possible, he was exposed in an ark of bulrushes by the brink of the river Nile. — *Nourished him for her own son*. Or, caused him to be taken care of and educated as her own son, though by his own mother. Ex. ii. 8–10.

22. *Learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians*, i. e. he was trained or educated in all their wisdom. What this consisted of is stated by vari-

the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in 23 deeds. And when he was full forty years old, it came into his 24 heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel. And seeing 25 one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him 26 that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian: for he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not. And the next day he showed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye

ous ancient authors; as, arithmetic, music, astronomy, astrology, medicine, geometry, hieroglyphics, poetry, physics and metaphysics, and ethics. Egypt was universally regarded and called the mother of the arts and sciences. Ancient civilization took its rise in that country, and was thence spread abroad through Greece, Rome, and other lands. The works of skill and power which still exist there, the pyramids, catacombs, and temples, excite the wonder and admiration of the traveller. The Jewish Rabbins said, "that, of the ten portions of wisdom which came into the world, the Egyptians had nine, and that all the other inhabitants of the earth had only the remaining portion." The Scriptures recognize the eminent wisdom of this people. See 1 Kings iv. 30; and Is. xix. 11-13. — *Mighty in words and in deeds.* Although Moses disclaimed any ability as a fluent orator, Ex. iv. 10, yet that he was mighty in words, as an inspired prophet and leader, as a counsellor as well as actor in the most remarkable scenes, is sufficiently proved by his wise laws and by the Pentateuch, written by him; and, as some writers have conjectured, by the authorship of the book of Job. Respecting his deeds, Josephus, in his Antiquities, relates a story of Moses' leading the Egyptian army in a war against the Ethiopians, who had invaded their territory, and obtaining a complete victory

over the enemy, and taking the capital city, Saba, or Meroe. But, independently of any such tradition, his miracles in Egypt, Ex. vii. - xii., and his guidance of the Israelites through the sea and the wilderness, justify the epithet of the text. Heb. xi. 23-29.

23, 24. *Full forty years old.* The Jews had a saying that "Moses was forty years in Pharaoh's palace, forty years in Midian, and forty years in the wilderness." Ver. 30. Stephen follows tradition here and in other places. — *It came into his heart.* How far he was as yet conscious of the part he was to take as a deliverer of the Hebrews, and author of a new system of religion, does not appear; but some foreshadowing of the future was present to his mind, according to ver. 25. — *To visit.* With a view to learn their condition and redress their wrongs. — *Suffer wrong.* As the Hebrews were in the most abject servitude, he soon found objects for his compassion and intercession. Ex. ii. 11, 12. His zeal burst out in open acts of violence against the oppressor. We here behold the fire of that spirit which afterwards kindled the whole nation, emitting its first flames. — *Smote*, i. e. killed the Egyptian.

25-28. *Understood how that God, &c.* This is a tradition, or an inference of the speaker. As God had promised that they should be delivered from their bondage; when they

wrong one to another? But he that did his neighbor wrong, 27  
 thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge  
 over us? Wilt thou kill me, as thou didst the Egyptian yester- 23  
 day? Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the 29  
 land of Midian, where he begat two sons. And when forty years 30  
 were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount

saw one so high in station and influence as Moses taking their part, they might naturally conclude that the day of deliverance was at hand; but slavery and woe had cast them into gloom and despair. They ceased to hope.—*They strove.* Ex. ii. 13. Two Hebrews were now in a quarrel.—*Set them at one*, i. e. pacified them, composed their difficulties. The words *at one* are sometimes formed into one term, *alone*, and used by early writers with the sense, to make one, or to make to agree. Hence the word *atonement*, at-one-ment, at or in one mind; reconciliation, harmony. Rom. v. 11.—*Sirs, ye are brethren, &c.* Beautiful reasoning! Excellent conclusion from noble premises! Since men, to enlarge the statement beyond all sectional and national limits, are all brethren, why should they quarrel and make war against one another? Why should they bite and devour one another? Why should they not recognize their brotherhood with one another, and their common sonship to God? Why should they not act on that just precept, “Each for all, and all for each”? In the midst of jarring interests, sects, parties, and nations, let the mild voice of Christian love be heard, adopting the sentiment of even an earlier faith, “Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another?”—*Who made thee, &c.* The usual recompense of blame for the peacemaker. Gen. xix. 9; Luke xii. 14. It is a touch of nature, that this repulse came from the injurer, and not the injured. He that is conscious in his own heart of wrong,

first becomes angry.—*As thou didst, &c.* The news had been spread abroad of the event of the day before.

29. *Then fled Moses, &c.* Ex. ii. 14, 15. Thus learning that the affair had become public, he fled from the vengeance of Pharaoh.—*Was a stranger.* Or, “a sojourner,” a temporary dweller.—*Midian.* Or Midian, a district of Arabia, so called from Midian, a son of Abraham. Gen. xxv. 2. This territory extended along the eastern shore of the Red Sea, and reached as far as Mount Sinai and the borders of Moab. Ex. iii. 1, xviii. 5; Num. xxxi.; Judg. vi. –viii. The Midianites afterwards became powerful enemies to the Hebrews.—*Two sons.* Moses married Zipporah, the daughter of Reuel, or Jethro, a Midianite priest, by whom he had two sons, Gershom and Eliezer. Ex. ii. 15 – 22.

30. *When forty years, &c.* See ver. 23. Moses was at this time eighty years old. Man, in his impatience, might regard the Providence of God as too long delaying its interposition; but the Almighty was slowly preparing the way for the triumphant deliverance of his people, by the instrumentality of one who was long buried in obscurity in the heart of an Arabian wilderness. It is the dictate of Christian faith and hope to behold the day slowly, but surely, approaching, when every chain of slavery shall be broken in every region of the earth.—*Mount Sina.* This account is reconciled with Ex. iii. 1, by the fact that the same mountain had two peaks; one called Horeb, and the

31 *Sina, an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush.* When Moses saw *it*, he wondered at the sight; and as he drew near to 32 behold *it*, the voice of the Lord came unto him, *saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.* Then Moses trembled, and durst not 33 behold. Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy 34 feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground. I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver 35 them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt. This Moses, whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send *to be* a ruler and a deliverer by the hand

other Sinai. Hence the two terms were used interchangeably. Robinson, in his Biblical Researches, comes to the conclusion that Horeb was originally the general name for the whole cluster of mountains, and Sinai that of a particular summit; but that, in subsequent times, as in the New Testament, Josephus, and other writers, Sinai became the general, and Horeb the specific, designation.—*An angel of the Lord in a flame, &c.* We here learn that by an angel is meant any manifestation of the divine presence or power, as in a dream, a voice, a vision, a wind, a fire. Ex. iii. 2, 4. It appears that the voice is represented as coming from God himself. The appearance was brilliant and splendid, as of a flaming fire; though not literally a fire, for the bush was not consumed. There is no evidence whatever, as some assert, that the angel of the Lord here and elsewhere spoken of was the Messiah.

31. *Wondered.* That the bush was not consumed. Ex. iii. 2, 3.

32. *I am the God of thy fathers, &c.* By which it was intimated that the covenant made with them was remembered, and would be fulfilled.

33. *Put off thy shoes from thy feet, &c.* In the East, contrary to our manners, it is a token of respect to uncov-

er the feet, but of disrespect to uncover the head. Worshippers took off their shoes or sandals before entering a temple, and suppliants before they entered the presence of a king.—*Is holy ground.* This command naturally impressed the mind of Moses with a solemn sense of veneration for the Almighty, who seemingly appeared to him here for the first time.

34. *I have seen, I have seen.* Repetition implies energy of emotion. “I have surely seen.” Comp. Ex. iii. 7.—*Am come down to deliver them.* As God is an omnipresent Spirit, he is in one place as much as another, or, to use the rather quaint expression, “His centre is every where, his circumference nowhere.” But to accommodate his language to the material conceptions of men, he represents himself as moving from place to place.

35. *Whom they refused.* Stephen would intimate that, as the rejection of Moses by his countrymen was no evidence against his divine mission, so the fact that Jesus was crucified conflicted not with his being the Messiah. It was a strong argument.

—*A ruler.* Or, military leader and governor.—*Deliverer.* Literally, ransomer, redeemer. Moses ransomed or redeemed the children of Israel, by the sacrifice and consecration of himself, and all his faculties and en-

of the angel which appeared to him in the bush. He brought 36 them out, after that he had showed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years. This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A 37 Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear. This is he, that 38 was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the Mount Sina, and *with* our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us: to whom our fathers would 39 not obey, but thrust *him* from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt, saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go 40 before us: for *as for* this Moses, which brought us out of the

ergies, to deliver them from the bondage of Egypt, and lead them into the promised land. He ransomed the captive Hebrews by paying no price, except that of his own "labors, dangers, and sufferings."

36. *He brought them out.* This very Moses, whom they rejected, was the grand instrument of their deliverance. — *Wonders and signs.* The same terms are applied to the miracles of Moses as to those of Christ. Chap. ii. 22. — *Egypt.* The miracles there consisted of the ten plagues, brought upon Pharaoh and his people, for refusing to dismiss the Hebrews. — *In the Red Sea.* Which lies between Arabia and Egypt, and is about 1400 miles long. It is so called by reason of a reddish tinge to its waters from some sea plant. The waters were parted for the passage of Moses and his host, but closed upon their pursuers and overwhelmed them. — *In the wilderness.* The pillar of fire by night, and cloud by day, the descent of manna and quails, and the drawing of streams of living water from a rock, were some of the "wonders and signs," in their journey in the wilderness. — *Forty years.* This long wandering was designed to purify the Hebrews from their idolatrous propensities, and prepare them for their inheritance in Canaan.

37. *This is that Moses, &c.* The very same Moses predicted the coming of that Messiah whom you, in imitation of the disobedience of your fathers, have rejected and destroyed. — *A prophet, &c.* See notes on chap. iii. 22, 23; Deut. xviii. 15.

38. *This is he.* Another emphatic reference to Moses. — *The church.* Or, the assembly; or, body of Israelites. The word is not to be understood in our sense of a church. — *The lively oracles.* Better, the living or life-giving oracles, in reference to the life which they imparted to the soul. It was promised to the obedient, that their lives should be prolonged in the land of Canaan. Lev. xviii. 5; Deut. xxxii. 47. The term *oracles* was used by the ancients to describe the responses or communications from their gods; and the same word is here employed for the divine instructions to the Hebrews. The revelations of God eminently deserved the epithet *life-giving*, for they call into healthy exercise and progress the higher and nobler faculties of the human constitution, and confer what may truly be called life, happiness, blessedness. John vi. 63, x. 10.

39, 40. *Our fathers would not obey.* The perversity of the Israelites is arrayed in darker colors, when contrasted with the honors which were

41 land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and 42 rejoiced in the works of their own hands. Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven ; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices *by the space of* forty years in 43 the wilderness ? Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them : and I will carry you away beyond Babylon. —

lavished upon Moses by the Almighty, as their ruler and deliverer, the receiver of the law, and the founder of a new dispensation of religion. Stephen would virtually draw the inference that, as were their ancestors, so were they, stiff-necked and faithless. — *In their hearts turned back.* Not that they desired to resume the yoke of bondage, but they yearned after the habits, and idolatries, and sensual enjoyments of Egypt. Ex. xvi. 3; Num. xi. 5. — *Make us gods*, i. e. idolatrous images ; for it was customary for many tribes to carry, when going to war, or taking a journey, idols, which were thought to give success to their enterprises. — *As for this Moses, &c.* An expression of contempt. — *We wot not.* Old English for “we know not.”

41. *They made a calf.* Ex. xxxii. We here find them already adopting the Egyptian idolatry, notwithstanding the wonders and signs through which they had passed ; for the principal divinity in that country was Apis, worshipped under the form of an ox, selected with great care, and containing certain peculiar marks. — *Offered sacrifice, &c.* They readily adopted the idolatrous solemnities and festivities of the nation, from which they had just been delivered.

42. *To worship the host of heaven.* A prevalent form of Oriental idolatry was Zabaism, or the worship of the heavenly bodies, the sun, moon, and

stars. — *In the book of the prophets.* Amos v. 25–27. Stephen cites the prophets to confirm his statements. The twelve minor prophets, from Hosea to Malachi, were included in one book by the Jews. — *Have ye offered, &c.* Implying that they had not offered sacrifices, or had mingled them with heathen rites, or had worshipped God in form, but not in deed and truth.

43. *Yea.* Better rendered, “nay.” So far from their uniformly rendering an acceptable worship to God, they even plunged into the grossest forms of heathen idolatry. — *Took up.* Or, bore about ; in allusion to the manner in which the images of heathen gods are carried round in processions, being placed aloft, to be seen and worshipped by the devotees. — *The tabernacle.* Or, case ; or, shrine ; intended to contain the statue of the god. — *Moloch.* Derived from the Hebrew word meaning *king*, and generally supposed to signify the sun, one of the host of heaven, ver. 42, which was worshipped by Oriental idolaters. It is evident that the Hebrews were at various periods addicted to the worship of this idol. See Lev. xviii. 21, xx. 2–5 ; Deut. xii. 31, xviii. 10 ; 1 Kings xi. 7 ; 2 Kings xvi. 3, xxl. 3, 6 ; Ps. cvi. 37, 38 ; Jer. vii. 31. The following description of this idol and its worship is quoted by Lightfoot from the Rabbins, in their comment on 2 Kings xxiii. 10 : “ His face was

Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as 43 he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen. Which also our 45 fathers, that came after, brought in with Jesus into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drove out before the face of our

like a calf, and his hands were stretched out as a man's that reacheth out to receive something from his neighbor. He was made of brass, and was heated with fire under, till he was glowing hot; and then the priests put the child into his arms, and there he was burnt; and the priests made a noise in the mean while with drums, that the father might not hear the child's cry; and therefore it was called 'Tophet,' from 'Toph,' a 'drum or tabor.' — *The star.* Which, Priestley remarks, shows that the deity which was represented was one of the host of heaven.— *Your god Remphan.* Called *Chiun* in Amos v. 26. The latter was probably the Syrian, the former the Egyptian, name; representing, as is conjectured, the planet Saturn. Zabaism, or the worship of the heavenly bodies, prevailed among many Eastern nations.— *Figures.* Literally, types, representations, images.— *And I will carry you away.* This was the retribution which would overtake them, for departing from the worship of the true God.— *Beyond Babylon.* Amos writes, "beyond Damascus." The scope of the sense is the same in both cases; for both are statements that they should be carried away as exiles into foreign countries of the East. Many of the Jews were, in point of fact, transported beyond Babylon into Assyria and Media. 2 Kings xvii. 6. Stephen would apparently remind his prejudiced hearers of the lapses of their fathers, and the frightful calamities which followed their rebellion.

44. *The tabernacle of witness.* Or, of testimony that God was with

them. The tabernacle of God is contrasted with the tabernacle of Moloch. Ver. 43. As the Hebrew religion was a theocracy, in which God was the king, and the priests and Levites were his ministers and courtiers, the tabernacle was in the place of the royal tent, in which the sovereign communicated, through his servants, with the people, and where his tables of commandments were kept, and his honor dwelt. Ex. xxix. 42, 43.— *As he had appointed,* i. e. God.— *Should make it according to the fashion, &c.* We learn, from Ex. xxv. 9, 40, xxvi. 30; Heb. viii. 5, that a model was given him, according to which the tabernacle was to be constructed. Stephen had testified his respect for Moses and the law; he now proceeds to vindicate his regard, indirectly, for the tabernacle and the temple, the holy places of their nation.

45. *Our fathers that came after.* Josh. iii. 14. Or, better, according to the margin and various versions, as Luther, Tyndale, and others, "our fathers having received." — *Jesus.* The Greek word for *Joshua*, the leader of the Hebrew host into the land of Canaan. Heb. iv. 8, has the same mistranslation.— *The Gentiles,* i. e. the Canaanites, who were driven out to make room for the establishment of a purer worship. The language of Stephen clearly implies that the Israelites acted under the direction of God, in extirpating the heathen tribes.— *Unto the days of David,* i. e. the tabernacle which was built by Moses, and carried into the promised land by Joshua, continued until the time of David.

46 fathers, unto the days of David; who found favor before God, 47 and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob. But 48 Solomon built him a house. Howbeit, the Most High dwelleth 49 not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest? 50 Hath not my hand made all these things? — Ye stiff-necked, 51 and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the

46, 47. *Found favor before God.* He is represented as a man after God's own heart, 1 Sam. xiii. 14; Ps. lxxxix. 20-24, and his reign was a brilliant epoch in Jewish history. — *Desired to find a tabernacle, &c.* David wished to build a temple, as a permanent place of deposit for the sacred things, and for the worship of the people, but was forbidden by God on account of his warlike character. 2 Sam. vii.; 1 Kings viii.; 1 Chron. xxii. 8. The word "tabernacle" is not the same in the original as that which is thus translated in ver. 43, 44, but means a pitched or stationary tent or dwelling. — *But Solomon built, &c.* David made extensive preparations, but Solomon was the builder of the temple. 1 Kings vi.; 1 Chron. xxii.

48. *Howbeit.* Notwithstanding the honor paid to God in building him tabernacles and temples, it was not to be imagined that he was limited to these sacred places; for the creation is his dwelling, the universe his temple. 1 Kings viii. 27, where the same lofty idea of the divine majesty was expressed by Solomon at the dedication of his temple. Acts xvii. 24. — *As saith the prophet.* A free quotation from Is. lxvi. 1.

49, 50. Stephen seems to adduce the testimony of Solomon and Isaiah to prove that there might be a superstitious reverence, as among the Jews, for the particular places of worship, and a forgetfulness that God was limited to no time nor

temple, but was unbounded in presence and glory. — *Heaven is my throne, &c.* Images taken from earthly royalty, to shadow forth the splendor of the divine majesty. We should endeavor to form true and enlarged conceptions of the being of God, avoiding the extreme of the Materialist on one side, and that of the Pantheist on the other. We ought to aspire continually after purer ideas, and more profound convictions of the reality, of the goodness and the unspeakable glory of God. By purity of heart, by the study of his works, the contemplation of his image in Jesus, and never-ceasing communion with his spirit, we should seek at the same time to increase our knowledge, and to strengthen our trust, in our Heavenly Father. The idea of God is the vital germ of all religion in the soul.

51. At this point, Stephen suddenly changes the strain of his remarks, and breaks out in a vehement appeal to his auditors, borne on by the stream of his own indignant feelings, and seeing the gathering passions of his enemies. He was perhaps interrupted in his defence, by a repetition of the charge of blasphemy, upon his remarks in ver. 49-51; and, finding that there was no room for conciliation, adopted the most indignant style of address. This would account for the abrupt transition from ver. 50 to 51. — *Ye stiff-necked.* A figure taken from the body to describe their self-will and

Holy Ghost: as your fathers *did*, so *do* ye. Which of the 52 prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers; who 53 have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.

When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and 54

perverseness, and often applied to the Jews in the Old Testament. Ex. xxxiii. 3, 5. — *Uncircumcised*. Lev. xxvi. 41; Jer. vi. 10. Another metaphorical expression, to describe their impiety and wickedness, taken from the great peculiar rite of the Jewish covenant. They were unwilling to hear, and, having heard, to be persuaded of, the truth. — *Resist the Holy Ghost*. Or, Spirit; i. e. according to Grotius and Rosenmuller, ye oppose yourselves to the admonitions of God, delivered by the prophets. Schleusner says, that the word *Spirit* here denotes all the means, by which God endeavors to reform the minds of men. — *As your fathers did, so do ye*. In their rejection of Jesus and his apostles, they were exact imitators of their fathers, who had persecuted Moses and the prophets. And as the opposition which the servants of God encountered of old was no argument against their divine commission, the same rule held good in respect to the divine authority of the Messiah.

52. *Which of the prophets, &c.* Mat. xxiii. 31, 35. A general declaration that persecution had been the lot of the servants of God, not that every individual was maltreated. — *Which showed before, &c.* Or, foretold. The prophets had predicted the coming of Christ. — *The Just One*, i. e. the just by eminence, the absolutely righteous. Acts iii. 14, xxii. 14; James v. 6. — *Have been now the betrayers, &c.* The chain of iniquity had been continued in unbroken succession;

like fathers, like sons. It was the same spirit, in every age, of hostility to the truth, and stubborn prejudice. The Jews betrayed or delivered up Christ into the hands of Pilate, and were instrumental of his murder by urging a sentence of condemnation against the will of the judge himself.

53. *The law*. Or, the Mosaic dispensation. — *By the disposition of angels*. Or, according to Winer, at, in consequence of, conformably to, such arrangements. The idea is, that angels were appointed as ministering instruments for its diffusion. Gal. iii. 19; Heb. ii. 2. A question has been raised, but not fully settled, whether by angels we are to consider Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and others, regarded as the messengers of God; or beings descending from other spheres to mingle in the concerns of men; or inanimate objects, as tempest, fire, wind, the executors of God's will. Ps. lxxviii. 49; Is. xxxvii. 36. — *And have not kept it*. His last words were a remonstrance against their wickedness in disobeying the law, which was solemnized by the administration of angels, and the sacrifice of a long line of prophets.

54. *They were cut to the heart*. See note on chap. v. 33, where the same verb is used without the noun. The passions, not the consciences, of the hearers, were excited. See chap. ii. 37. — *GNASHED ON HIM, &c.* Expressive of the most ungovernable rage. Since Stephen was violently interrupted before he closed his de-

55 they gnashed on him with *their* teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory 56 of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing 57 on the right hand of God. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, 58 and cast *him* out of the city, and stoned *him*: and the witnesses

fence, it is impossible to say, with certainty, what conclusions he would have drawn from the Jewish history; or how he would have used them to vindicate his innocence, had he been permitted to close his remarks. But this recapitulation was probably intended as a tacit, if not a direct, testimony to his respect for Moses and the law, and to the waywardness of the Jews under every succession of teachers, past and present.

55, 56. *Full of the Holy Ghost.* Spirit. Stephen, the first martyr, is miraculously animated and sustained, that he might exhibit an inspiring example of fortitude to encourage that "noble army" which was to come after him. — *Saw the glory of God, &c.* "This prophetic view was presented to him in the form of a symbolic vision. As he looked up to heaven, it appeared to open before his eyes. In more than earthly splendor, there appeared to him a form of divine majesty; he beheld Christ, (whose glorious image was probably present to him from actual recollection,) glorified and enthroned at the right hand of God. Already in spirit raised to heaven, he testified with full confidence of what he beheld." — *Jesus standing, &c.* He is usually represented as sitting at the right hand of God, Mat. xxvi. 64; Mark xvi. 19; but the posture of standing indicated his having arisen, as it were, to approve and assist his suffering disciple. — *Behold, I see, &c.* This declaration stimulated them to new fury and outrage. He not only

claimed a miraculous character for his Master, but professed himself to enjoy divine visions. Though rejected by his earthly judges, he looked up to a loftier tribunal, "the high bench of heaven," and beheld the signals of approval and assistance in the celestial presence.

57. *They cried out, &c.* These various acts were not merely the expressions of rage, or intended to drown the alleged blasphemy of Stephen, but they were symbolical actions, to denote their horror and detestation of his speech. The Sanhedrim and the spectators joined in these tumultuary proceedings. — *Stopped their ears.* As if to hear no further words from his lips. According to the Jewish writers, it was customary to exhibit like tokens of displeasure, whenever blasphemous or indecent language was heard. Mat. xxvi. 65.

58. *Cast him out of the city.* It was not lawful to execute a condemned person within the limits of the city. Lev. xxiv. 14; 1 Kings xxi. 13; Luke iv. 29. We see, in the present instance, how much more powerful was their superstition than their sense of right. They could put a good man to death without compunction, but they could not do it without conforming to the utmost punctilio of ceremonial custom. Comp. John xviii. 28. — *Stoned him.* The punishment for blasphemy. The death of Stephen appears to have taken place, not by a formal decree of the Sanhedrim, for that

laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon *God*, and saying, 59

body no longer had the power of life and death, being under the Roman government, but by a riotous assault. The regularity of their proceedings in casting him out of the city, and in the fact that the witnesses cast the first stone, rather strengthens, than subverts, this view. For such mobs are usually observant, in some points of the letter of the law, in proportion as they outrage its spirit.—*Laid down their clothes.* To give themselves the more freedom, they laid aside, as usual when exercising, their mantles, or loose outer garments. According to custom, the witnesses, chap. vi. 11, 13, threw the first stone, as if to seal the truth of their testimony, and to show that they were accountable for what was done. The criminal was commonly first thrown down an eminence upon a large stone, and, if that failed to kill him, he was then stoned with large stones; first by the witnesses, and then by the people at large. Deut. xvii. 7; Lev. xxiv. 16.—*A young man's feet—Saul.* Paul, the person here spoken of under the name of Saul, calls himself “aged” in Phil. 9. This is accounted for by the fact that there was an interval of about thirty years between the martyrdom of Stephen, A. D. 34, and the period of the Epistle to Philemon, about A. D. 62. His office of taking care of the garments of the witnesses, while they were engaged in this dreadful crime, showed his interest, and guilty participation, in the deed. Chap. xxii. 20.

59. *Calling upon God.* This is an instance of the sectarian biases of the translators. The word “*God*,” in Italics, is not in the original, but is introduced by them wholly without authority. The true rendering is “invoking and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” As has been

conceded by Trinitarian writers, there is no authority here for addressing supreme worship to Christ. Hey says, “There is not, perhaps, any express command to invoke Christ under the title of *God*. The early Christians used to invoke Christ, and Pliny says, ‘*tanquam Deum*;’ yet Pliny’s idea of a *God* was not confined to the one supreme invisible Being. St. Stephen addresses Christ, but does not use the word *God*, though it is found in our translation, in Italics; and his address is the ejaculation of a man dying in the Christian cause.” Coleridge also says, “that Christ was visually present to Stephen: his invocation, therefore, was not, perforce, an act of religious adoration, an acknowledgment of Christ’s Deity.” The circumstances under which Stephen invoked Jesus were peculiar, entirely different from those of believers at the present day; for he enjoyed a vision of Jesus in the heavenly state, distinct from God; and he therefore addresses him as he would have done if upon the earth, and commends his spirit to his care. It was an act of faith in him, as the resurrection and the life, as the Intercessor with the Father, as the Judge of the quick and the dead; but not the ascription to him of divine attributes, or the rendering of supreme homage, which Jesus, both by example and precept, taught his disciples to give to the Almighty alone. Mat. vi. 9; Luke xxiii. 34, 46; Rev. xix. 10. It is very remarkable, as has been said, and illustrative of this text, that Michael Servetus, the martyr of Geneva, when on the way to the stake, whose agonies he endured in consequence of his faith, *that Jesus Christ was not the supreme Deity*, often exclaimed, “O God, save my soul! O Jesus,

60 Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Son of the Eternal God, have mercy upon me!" — *Receive my spirit*, i. e. to thy presence, to thy blessedness.

60. *He kneeled down.* He took this posture on account of the wounds he had received from his cruel enemies, as well as from its being the attitude of devotion. — *Cried with a loud voice.* The agony of expiring nature. — *Lord, lay not this sin to their charge*, i. e. impute not this sin to them. Hold them not responsible for this crime. This beautiful petition breathed the very spirit of him who prayed on the cross, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. Luke xxiii. 34. Though he had just denounced, in unsparing terms, their wickedness, yet he felt the tenderest compassion for their impenitence. He thus exhibited those combined elements of the gentle and the severe, the mild and the heroic, which constitute the most exalted form of human excellence. In relation to the connexion of the dying martyr with the future apostle to the Gentiles, Augustine pointedly said, "If Stephen had not prayed, the church would not have had St. Paul." — *He fell asleep.* This softened expression is often used by the Jewish and Scripture writers to denote death; for what is death, rightly viewed, but a sleep? The force of the phrase is more prominent in this case, when the contrast is felt between the violence of his enemies and the peaceful death of their victim. 1 Cor. xv. 18, 20.

"With awful dread his murderers shook,  
As, radiant and serene,  
The lustre of his dying look  
Was like an angel's seen."

In considering the character of Stephen's speech before the Jewish Sanhedrim, a disappointment is often

experienced, as if it was not adapted to the purposes of the defence, and its point is not readily seen. But this difficulty will be relieved by examining the following particulars in the case: (1.) The charge of blasphemy against God and Moses, by asserting that Christ would destroy the holy place and subvert the law and ritual of Moses. (2.) Stephen's recital of Jewish history testified to his devout veneration for Moses as the messenger of God: his declarations respecting the tabernacle and temple indirectly showed his respect for the Jewish worship. But from these very elements and rudiments of a pure religion, he showed, according to the testimony of Moses and the prophets themselves, that their system was but preliminary to that of a greater prophet, ver. 37, and a more universal and spiritual worship, ver. 48—50, while the frequent rebellions of the Hebrews against their divine leaders, ver. 9, 25, 35, 39, 40, 51, 52, found but too exact a counterpart, in the crucifixion of the Messiah and the persecution of his followers. It was no proof, therefore, against the divine authority of Jesus, that he had been rejected by his countrymen, for they had always been a stiff-necked and rebellious race. (3.) If the address of the martyr seem inappropriate and inconclusive, it is to be remembered that it was brought to an abrupt and violent termination by the ferocity of his judges, who gave him no time to make his intended application.

In the death of Stephen, we perceive the pulsation of a new and more intense life in the heart of the Christian church. It was a witness to the truth of Christianity, sealed with blood. It was a proof of the

## CHAPTER VIII.

*The Persecution of the Church, the Account of Simon Magus, and the Conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch.*

AND Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen *to his burial*, and made great lamentation

zeal of the believers, and the augury of their success; for nothing has ever been more true than that “the blood of the martyrs has been the seed of the church.” In the serene self-possession of this proto-martyr, we witness the power of religion in the most terrible exigencies of our condition; and in the prayer of mercy for his murderers the noblest attestation to the influence of the gospel, in creating a spirit of entire self-sacrifice and of boundless benevolence.

## CHAPTER VIII.

1. *Saul was consenting unto his death.* Or, literally, “to his taking off.” “Consenting” is too feeble. Tyndale better renders it, “Saul had pleasure in his death,” as the verb means to take pleasure with others in any thing. The zeal of Paul led him not only to consent to, but to rejoice in, the death of so distinguished an advocate of the gospel. This clause is most unfortunately separated from the last chapter, to which it belongs, by the absurd division of the chapters. — *At that time.* The martyrdom of Stephen was the signal to new outrages. The enemies of the church, having once tasted blood, raged with increased fury against their unhappy victims. Chap. xi. 19. We enter, at this point, upon a new epoch in the development of Christianity. The first seven chapters of the Acts contain an account of the progress of the new

religion in the holy city. But the history now takes us beyond these limits, and records its triumphs in Judea, Samaria, and over the Gentiles. Chap. viii. — xii. — *A great persecution.* This was the first great assault upon the Christian church, in which he who was afterwards one of the chiefest of the apostles, was the leading spirit. Chap. xxvi. 10 — 12. — *The church which was at Jerusalem.* Notwithstanding the pretensions of Rome, this was the earliest church of Christ. — *Were all scattered abroad, &c.* In obedience to the Master’s injunction, Mat. x. 23, when persecuted in one city, they fled into another. — *Except the apostles.* Until their services were required in other places, ver. 14, they remained in the holy city, braving the fury of persecution, chap. xii. 1, 2, in order to protect the rising interests of the infant church.

2. *Carried.* This word is technically used for the preparation of a corpse for burial, and is rendered by Tyndale “dressed Steven,” i. e. for interment. — *Made great lamentation.* As for one whom they highly esteemed and deeply mourned. These testimonies of respect were given not only by Christian believers, but by Jews also, “devout men,” who disapproved of the popular fanaticism. Acts ii. 5. “Among the Jews, and, indeed, among most nations of the earth, it was esteemed a work of piety, charity, and mercy, to bury the dead.” Mat. xxvii. 57, 59, 60; John xix. 39, 40.

3 over him. As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women, committed *them* to prison:

4 Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word. Then Philip went down to the city of

3. *Made havoc.* Ravaged. This word is commonly used in describing the ferocity of wild beasts, in seizing and devouring their prey. It vividly describes the devastations of the young zealot among the Christian flock. Gal. i. 13. — *Entering into every house.* Or, breaking into every house. His forcible entry into private houses for his victims, showed the terrible energy of his persecution, sparing no place, age, nor sex. Chap. xxii. 4. — *Haling.* Indicating the violence with which they were dragged before magistrates or to prison. — *Committed them to prison.* Preliminary to trial by the Sanhedrim, and execution by the Romans. Saul was empowered by the chief priests, chap. xxvi. 10, and acted in this affair from a mistaken religious zeal, and with an unenlightened conscience, thinking that he was serving God, laboring for his glory. But his sin consisted in the obstinacy of his prejudices, and his blind adherence to a bigoted sense of duty. The sincerity of Paul, his conscientiousness, and his zeal, were all laudable; but his example has left a lesson that ought never to be forgotten in the world, viz., that, if any infusion of blind self-will and sullen adherence to the ancient faith, because *it is the ancient faith*, mingle in our motives; if we do not seek the light, and examine for ourselves, and cling to our purest convictions of truth, we may fall into the ranks of Paul the persecutor, rather than of Stephen the martyr.

4. *Went every where preaching the word.* Or, evangelizing, or proclaiming the glad tidings of the gospel.

The dispersed Christians fled into various countries, chap. xi. 19, bearing the message of salvation far and wide. “These holy fugitives were like so many lamps, lighted by the fire of the Holy Spirit, spreading every where the sacred flame by which they themselves had been illuminated.” Here was a practical demonstration of the futility of persecution; for the very means so vigorously applied to crush the cause of truth, only served to give it a wider extension, like seed scattered from a shaken tree, and borne to every quarter by the furious blasts of the tempest.

5. *Philip.* It is agreed that this was Philip, the deacon, one of the seven, chap. vi. 5, elsewhere called the evangelist, chap. xxi. 8, and not Philip the apostle, chap. i. 13; for we are told, ver. 1, that the apostles remained at Jerusalem, and that their assistance was afterwards required, ver. 14 — 17, in granting the gift of the Holy Spirit. As the history of the first of the seven, Stephen, chap. vi. 5, was given in the foregoing chapter, Luke proceeds here to relate the acts of Philip, the second in that catalogue. — *The city of Samaria.* Or, “a city of Samaria,” the country. There was no city at that time called Samaria, for the ancient one of that name had been totally effaced from the earth. The one here referred to was either Sebaste, or Augusta, built by Herod the Great, in honor of Augustus, the Roman emperor; or Sychar, or Sichem, near Mount Gerizim; which is the more probable, as it had already been favored by the teachings of the Saviour

Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with 6 one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, 7 crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city. — But 8 there was a certain man, called Simon, which before time in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria,

himself. John iv. As Samaria was partly settled by Jews, received the Pentateuch, and expected the coming of the Messiah, it was ripe for the labors of the Christian evangelist.—

*Preached Christ.* The term *Christ*, in the New Testament, ought, in a multitude of cases, to receive the definite article before it, where it has been omitted by the translators. The grand question was, whether the Messiah, *the Christ*, the Promised, Expected One, had actually appeared; and the preaching of the early disciples was clearly directed to the point, as here by Philip, to identify Jesus as *the Christ*. Our Lord had directed his followers to proclaim his gospel in Samaria. Chap. i. 8.

6. *The people with one accord gave heed.* The candor of the Samaritans compares favorably with the obstinate prejudices of the Jews. John iv. 35–41. — *Hearing, and seeing the miracles.* The labors of the disciples, as of the Master, consisted of two great divisions—words and deeds, instructions and miracles.

7, 8. *Unclean spirits.* See note on chap. v. 16. — *Palsies.* Priestley remarks that “the cure of madness, which was imagined by the Jews to be occasioned by the agency of evil spirits, and that of the palsy, which is also here mentioned, were both of them miracles of a very extraordinary nature, and they are always noticed as such in all the gospel history.” — *There was great joy in that city.* The natural result of the

relief afforded to the sick and wretched, and the proclamation of those truths which are fitted to guide and cheer the hearts of men.

9. *Simon.* The history of this individual is involved in great obscurity, and little reliance can be put upon many of the traditions preserved, concerning him, by the early Christian fathers. He is usually termed *Simon Magus*, from his practising magical arts. The Magi, wise men, were distinguished for their knowledge of astronomy and astrology, by which they professed to calculate the fortunes of individuals; and for their acquaintance with the powers of nature and the remedies of diseases, by which they could astonish mankind, and impose upon their credulity, as being possessors of more than mortal power. They could, therefore, act as jugglers, and, by their knowledge of some of the facts of natural philosophy, play tricks of legerdemain. Norton remarks that, “from all the notices of Simon, it does not seem likely that he much affected the character of a speculative philosopher or theologian, or was solicitous to establish any system of doctrines. He appears to have been a bold, artful, vainglorious, dishonest adventurer, claiming to possess supernatural powers, and having much skill in obtaining control over the minds of others. He may be classed with certain impostors and fanatics, not uncommon in the age in which he lived, who, proceeding on the

10 giving out that himself was some great one: to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, because that 12 of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. But when they believed Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, 13 both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, be-

doctrines of the Pythagorean Platonists (as they may be called) pretended, through mystical exercises of mind, to have attained a communion with the invisible world, and to possess a power, which they denominated *theurgy*, of performing supernatural works by divine assistance. Simon had learned in a similar school; and though he was probably more of an impostor than a fanatic, yet a religious impostor can hardly be very successful without a mixture of fanaticism. If he succeed in deceiving others, he commonly succeeds, partially at least, in deceiving himself. The false opinion which he creates in those about him, reacts on his own mind. Simon, we may suppose, like the generality of men in his age, was a believer in the power of magic, or theurgy, and, when he saw the miracles performed by Philip, was filled with astonishment, and regarded him as operating through magical powers, unknown to himself." Simon was accounted by the early writers as the head of the Gnostics, and the father of all heresies. Hence there was nothing too bad to be said of him. But, as observed by Olshausen, this was because the heretical element first pressed into the church in Simon. His was a convenient name to which to attach every thing evil. — *Beforetime*, i. e. before Philip came thither, Simon had been practising his magical arts in Samaria. — *Used sorcery*. The whole is one participle

in Greek, signifying practising as a Magus or magician. — *Bewitched*. This unfortunate translation was made at a period when witchcraft was a part of the popular, and even religious, belief. The same word is translated "wondered" in the thirteenth verse, in relation to the emotion felt by Simon for the miracles of Philip, and should have been rendered in the same way in this verse. He astonished the people of Samaria, or made them wonder. — *Some great one*. Some extraordinary being, whose title is given in the next verse.

10. *From the least to the greatest*, i. e. all, of every class and age. — *This man is the great power of God*. Or, as Griesbach and other critics read, "This man is the power of God, called Great." What these words exactly mean, we cannot now understand. But the probable sense is, that they regarded him as a "manifestation of the highest power of God." "The mighty power of God energizes in him."

11. *Bewitched*. The same remark is to be made on this word as in ver. 9.

12, 13. The fact that Philip was able to compete successfully with this great impostor, and divert the attention of the people at large from their blind wonder, to a practical and saving faith in the gospel, attests the power with which he was intrusted, both to preach and to work miracles. When Simon saw the real miracles

holding the miracles and signs which were done. — Now when 14 the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them that they 15 might receive the Holy Ghost: (for as yet he was fallen upon 16 none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they *their* hands on them, and they received 17

of Philip, he was struck with amazement, and apparently sought, by becoming his adherent, to gain the same art. His profession of Christianity was vitiated by corrupt motives; his belief was mercenary. He was a speculator in signs and wonders. — *Wondered*, i. e. to take up the translation of ver. 9 and 11 of the same word, “was bewitched.” — *Miracles and signs*. Or, signs and great miracles, as in the margin. Simon was amazed to find himself outdone in his own profession.

14. *That Samaria had received*, &c. Evidently a general expression, implying that the cause prospered abundantly in that region, not that the whole country was actually Christianized. — *They sent unto them Peter and John*. Who had been before united, chap. iii. iv., in the work of the ministry. They were delegated to aid Philip with their efforts and authority, and confer the gift of the Holy Spirit. In relation to the claims of the Roman Catholic church, and of its alleged founder, Whitby remarks; “Here we find Peter sent by the other apostles, and by the church, which is a sign he was not their head and superior; for greater is he that sends than he that is sent.”

15. *Come down*. Not that they literally descended, but it was a mode of language to speak of *going up* to a great city, and of *coming down* from it. John vii. 8. — *Receive the Holy Ghost*. Almost universally understood as signifying those miraculous gifts, which were a seal of their

faith, and an instrument of usefulness to others. The apostles appear to have been the only ones who possessed the power of conferring these gifts.

16, 17. *He*. Should be “it;” the Spirit being impersonal. — *In the name of the Lord Jesus*. Or, “into the name,” &c. This formula is essentially the same as that used in Mat. xxviii. 19, and is generally adopted in the book of Acts. The authority of Philip extended only as far as baptism. — *Laid their hands on them*. Not probably upon all, at least not upon Simon Magus; though what he asked was not the gift of the Spirit, but the power of communicating it to others. There is no reason to believe that there was any particular virtue in imposition of hands, except as a sign or token. It was a custom, not an essential. Jesus put his hands upon the children he blessed. The apostles laid their hands upon the seven deacons, when they were set apart for their office. The act was symbolical of a blessing invoked and conferred. Mat. xix. 15; Acts vi. 6. The sacrament of confirmation, as held by the Roman Catholic church, and the same regarded as a necessary rite, and required by the church of England, before persons can be admitted to the communion, are justified by this and other texts. But there is no evidence of a peculiar ordinance being established at this time, and designed to be perpetual in the church. Besides, none but the apos-

18 the Holy Ghost. — And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered 19 them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast

ties, not even Philip the evangelist, could invoke the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Samaritan converts ; and there is not a particle of evidence that the apostolic office and authority were delegated to any successors. The object, then, was, moreover, to convey to the believer the extraordinary, and not, as is done now, the ordinary, gifts of the Holy Spirit.

18, 19. *When Simon saw — he offered them money.* Notwithstanding he had been baptized, and believed in the miracles and doctrines of the gospel, it is plain that he comprehended not its real object. He looked at it as a better species of sorcery than his own, and therefore sought to become acquainted with it. He beheld the apostles doing mightier works than his own, and he wished to get possession of the same power ; not to do good, but for the purposes of self-interest. The mercenary character of his feelings was demonstrated by his offer of money to purchase the holy power ; which, in turn, he thought to use as an instrument for making money, and for increasing his own reputation. In the language of Norton, "He probably thought Jesus to have been a great theurgist, and wished to become possessed of the secrets which he imagined him to have communicated to his disciples. Being confirmed in this state of mind by witnessing the effects produced by the imposition of the hands of the apostles, he did what naturally occurred to him — he offered money to purchase their disclosure. He was at first humbled and terrified by the

severe rebuke of Peter ; but no evil immediately followed ; and it appears, from the further accounts of him, that he resumed confidence, pursued his former course of life, and was excited to set himself up as a rival of our Lord." — *That on whomsoever, &c.* He desired a gift which the apostles did not and could not convey — the power of granting the Holy Spirit, the gifts of tongues, and miracles to yet others. This request, therefore, met, in fact, — though only one is assigned — with two grounds of denial ; one, that it was impracticable to be granted ; and the other, that it was sacrilegious ; an attempt to purchase what was the free gift of God with money.

20. *Thy money perish with thee.* This expression has been variously regarded by different expositors, as an imprecation — a prediction — a denunciation. The apparent tenor of the phrase is certainly imprecatory. It seems to say, "Let thy money and thyself go to perdition." It was uttered impulsively by Peter ; and though it might somewhat conflict with the perfect spirit of Christian love for the sinner, yet we do not profess to predicate perfection of the apostles, as we do of their Master. At one time they were ready to invoke fire upon their enemies. Luke ix. 54. Paul uses, chap. xxiii. 3, an expression savoring strongly of imprecation, and he hesitates not to accuse Peter and Barnabas of unworthy compliances and dissimulation. Gal. ii. 13, 14. The apostles were men ; and it is one proof of the divinity of the gospel,

thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is 21

that, although they were comparatively uneducated, enveloped in Jewish prejudices, and marked by some imperfections of character, they yet wrought miracles, not by their own holiness, chap. iii. 12, and taught a spiritual faith far transcending their condition, education, and original characters. Peter's words in the text were severe and denunciatory, and perhaps it may be said that, even if imprecatory, they proceed from a praiseworthy spirit. God has charged our nature with a latent fire of moral indignation, seemingly designed to put the wicked in awe, that they sin not; which results in sin only when it is allowed to exert a long and corroding influence upon the affectionate sensibilities of the heart. Our Saviour himself appears not to have been destitute of this moral indignation, though immediately tempered with compassion. Mark iii. 5; Eph. iv. 26. Wakefield renders the expression, "away with thee and thy money." — *The gift of God, &c.* The precise impiety of this sorcerer consisted in the sacrilege which he would commit upon sacred things, the confounding of celestial gifts with the grossest interests of earth, and the blasphemous idea that the Spirit of God could be put up for sale in the market. Mat. x. 8, xii. 32. From the case of Simon, the crime of buying or selling ecclesiastical preferments or church benefices has been denominated *Simony* — a sin only known in church establishments, in which there is a union of ecclesiastical and political power, and the control of curacies is lodged in the hands of wealthy patrons.

21. *Neither part nor lot.* A Hebrew repetition of terms, expressive of strength of meaning. Deut. x. 9. So far from his being gifted with

the highest privileges of the apostolic office, he would be cut off from all participation in the blessings of the gospel, if he indulged in so gross and sordid a spirit. — *In this matter.* Or, literally, "in this word, doctrine," i. e. in the gospel, in the promises and joys of the Christian faith. He had shown himself incapable of appreciating the purpose of the apostles, and placed their wonderful and beneficent miracles on a level with his own tricks. He was thus incapacitated, not arbitrarily, but from the very nature of things, from tasting of the peculiar satisfactions and blessings of a self-denying, heroic, and benevolent life like theirs. — *Thy heart is not right in the sight of God.* The reason is here assigned for the foregoing declaration. The motive of the magician was corrupt. His heart was impure in the sight of the holy and omniscient God. His aim was not human good, and the divine glory, but self-aggrandizement. "Peter's terrible rebuke presents him to us as a faithful preacher of the gospel, insisting most impressively on the supreme importance of *disposition* in every thing which is imparted by Christianity, in direct opposition to the art of magic, which disregards the necessary connexion of the divine and supernatural with the disposition of the heart, drags them down into the circle of the natural, and attempts to appropriate to itself divine power by means of something else than that which is allied to it in human nature, and the only possible point of connexion for it. The poetical fancies of Christian antiquity, which make Peter the representative of the principle of simple faith in revelation, and Simon the representative of the magical and theosophic (speculative) tendency in

22 not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thy heart may be 23 forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which

the human mind, have important truths for their basis." — NEANDER.

22. *Repent — pray.* Two great duties are incumbent on the sinner — to lament the wickedness of the past, to supplicate guidance for the future — reformation and devotion, restitution and piety. He cannot truly repent of his sins, who does not humble himself before God, and beseech his pardon. And he cannot truly pray to Him, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, who does not deplore every erring step, and resolve and strive to amend his course. — *If perhaps the thought, &c.* Actions are not man's only sins. The field of moral responsibility includes more than his mere overt conduct. The wide empire of thoughts, wishes, imaginings, falls under the jurisdiction of the divine laws. Though Simon had only *thought*, not executed, his bad design, yet for the conception he was accountable, and must exercise repentance. The *perhaps* of the apostle refers, of course, not to any doubt that God would forgive the sinful thought, if repented of, but to the contingency of Simon's repentance. God is gracious, and forgives every sin that is repented of; but the question here was, whether the evil man would repent or not. Pardon follows penitence with the certainty of effect following cause. But this was a species of sin against the Holy Spirit, which argued such a state of mind as rendered it doubtful whether the evil-doer would be inclined to repent, and fulfil the conditions on which alone forgiveness is bestowed. See notes on Mat. xii. 31, 32. If we have sinned, though but in thought,

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if our bad purpose never has ripened into the bitter fruit of positive and overt transgression, yet the obligations to repent and pray are as binding upon us now, as they were upon Simon. The laws of the Creator are the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. Dan. iv. 27; Joel ii. 14; Jonah iii. 9.

23. *In the gall of bitterness.* To describe the deep depravity of Simon, the apostle uses this figurative expression. The primary sense of gall is bile, the bitter secretion of the liver; and hence comes a secondary meaning of malignity, bitterness of spirit, wickedness. Simon was in the condition of sin, whose ways are hard and bitter. Deut. xxix. 18; Rom. iii. 14; Heb. xii. 15. — *In the bond of iniquity.* The bad man is represented as bound by his sins, as a prisoner who is held fast by his chains. Prov. v. 22. The sinner is often represented in the Scriptures as the slave of sin, as he truly is. John viii. 34; Rom. vii. 23. Simon was in a bitter and enslaved state. His avarice, vainglory, and hypocrisy, had thrown many a chain around his spiritual and immortal nature, and infused many a bitter and deadly drug into the sweet cup of life.

24. *Pray ye to the Lord for me, &c.* Alarmed by the severe language of Peter, he requests his intercession, as believing that he had great influence with that mysterious power whose vengeance he feared; but his own language intimates that his repentance was insincere and unworthy; that he desired, not so much to be delivered from his sins, as from their inevitable consequences. Ver.

ye have spoken come upon me. — And they, when they had <sup>25</sup> testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.

And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise <sup>26</sup> and go toward the south, unto the way that goeth down from

20. True humility and penitence would have dictated different words. If we may credit the accounts of ecclesiastical history, he continued an inveterate enemy to the gospel, the great heresiarch of Christian antiquity; but probably much of fable mingled in these ancient traditions. It is difficult to separate the wheat from the chaff. Mr. Norton, in his late work on the Genuineness of the Gospels, considers the narrative given by Justin Martyr, respecting the dedication at Rome of a statue to Simon as a god, as probably trustworthy, though it has been generally set aside by Protestant writers. If this fact be substantiated, it would indicate the continuance of Simon in his magical practices, and his visiting Rome, as reported by the early writers. The relation of Justin Martyr is contained in his first Apology for Christianity, as follows: "After the return of Christ to heaven, the demons put forward certain men, calling themselves gods, who not only were not persecuted, but were honored by you. Such was Simon, a certain Samaritan, who, during the reign of Claudius Cesar, having performed magical works, through the art and power of demons, in your imperial city of Rome, was accounted a god, and has been honored by you with a statue as a god, which statue has been erected on the island in the Tiber, between the two bridges, with this inscription in Latin: *Simoni Deo Sancto*; and almost all the Samaritans, and a few also among other nations, acknowledge and worship him as the First God."

25. *And they, &c.* i. e. the apostles Peter and John. — *Testified.* No little part of their apostolic office consisted in bearing testimony to the fundamental facts of Christianity. — *Returned to Jerusalem.* As the headquarters of their labors and influence. — *In many villages, &c.* In this missionary tour, they found the Samaritans even more prepared than the Jews, to welcome their instructions.

26. *The angel.* Properly, an angel. By what method the communication was made to Philip, whether internally or externally, it is in vain to conjecture. Ver. 29 would indicate a silent suggestion to the mind, without any voice or miraculous appearance. — *Toward the south,* i. e. from Samaria, where Philip then was. — *Gaza.* This was one of the most ancient cities of Canaan, Gen. x. 19, and was celebrated as one of the five cities of the five Philistine lords. Josh. x. 41, xv. 47; 1 Sam. vi. 17. It was the scene of many of the exploits of Samson. Judg. xvi. Gaza was situated about sixty miles southwest from Jerusalem, at a distance of about two and a half miles from the Mediterranean Sea. Arrian says "that it was the last inhabited town as a man goes from Phœnicia to Egypt, on the borders of the wilderness." Its situation as a frontier town, lying between Egypt and Palestine, on the great route of the military expeditions between Egypt and the kings of Assyria, Persia, and Syria, subjected it to all the changes and barbarities of war. It was captured by Alexander the Great, in his

27 Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose, and went : and behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her 28 treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, was return-

expedition into Egypt; was rebuilt, and afterwards destroyed again by Alexander Janneus, and again rebuilt by the Roman general Gabinius ; and, from the fact that coins exist of this city, struck in honor of Titus and other following emperors, it is inferred that the term *desert*, in this verse, referred to the way, and not to the town, which was flourishing at this time. It was visited by Robinson in 1838, and he computes its population as consisting of fifteen or sixteen thousand inhabitants, being larger than Jerusalem. As it is situated on the line of the great caravans which pass between Egypt and Asia, it enjoys a considerable and prosperous commerce. — *Which is desert*, i. e. which way lies through a desert, or thinly-peopled region. This was probably said to point out the road, on which he would fall in with the eunuch. According to Robinson, there appear to have been anciently two roads leading from Jerusalem to Gaza, which exist, indeed, at the present day, though not generally travelled. One, through Eleutheropolis to Gaza, actually passes now through the desert, i. e. a tract of country without villages, inhabited only by nomadic Arabs.

27. *Ethiopia*. There were two countries called *Cush* or *Ethiopia* in Asia, one situated in the region of the Tigris and Euphrates, Zeph. iii. 10, and the other in what is called *Arabia Felix*. 2 Chron. xxi. 16 ; Hab. iii. 7. But this was the African Ethiopia, Ethiopia Superior or Proper, lying south of Egypt, and now including Abyssinia, Nubia, and Sennaar, the capital of which was Meroe, which name was also some-

times applied to the whole country. — *Candace*. We learn, from ancient pagan authors, that this was not an individual name, but the title of the female sovereigns of the kingdom, as Cesar was of the emperors of Rome, and Seleucus of the kings of Syria. Strabo, speaking of an insurrection of the Ethiopians against the Romans, says, “ Among these were the officers of Queen Candace, who in our days reigned over the Ethiopians.” Pliny, in his Natural History, in speaking of Meroe, says that “ the report made by the messengers of Nero was that the edifices of the city were few ; that a woman reigned there of the name of Candace, which name had descended to their queens successively for many years.” These authorities are of great weight, as indicating that the epithet was applied to the queen of that country. — *Who had the charge of all her treasure*. The office of treasurer was one of the highest in rank and responsibility, as is apparent from the preceding expression, “ a eunuch of great authority ;” by which is implied that he was lord-chamberlain of the royal household, a counsellor of state. — *Had come to worship*. By this it appears that he was a Jew, or, more likely, a Jewish proselyte, who had taken this distant journey from the dictates of piety, in order to be present at one of the great festivals of the Jews, probably that of the Passover.

28. *Sitting in his chariot*. We learn from the Scriptures, that wheel carriages were used in the most ancient times. Gen. xlvi. 19 ; Ex. xiv. 25. What the construction of the carriage in the text was, cannot be

ing; and sitting in his chariot, read Esaias the prophet. Then 29 the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to *him*, and heard him read the 30 prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? 31 And he desired Philip that he would come up, and sit with him. The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led 32 as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: in his humiliation his 33 judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his genera-

determined with any accuracy, since there were various species of chariots, some drawn by horses, and others by oxen.—*Read Esaias the prophet*, i. e. Isaiah. The Ethiopian probably used the Greek or Septuagint version of the Scriptures, made at Alexandria, which was in extensive circulation. It was one of the directions of the Jewish Rabbins, that, “when any one was going on a journey, and had not a companion, he should study the law.” Passages are also cited from their writings, in which it is enjoined that students of the word of God should read aloud. After the narrative of Simon Magus, that of the Ethiopian eunuch seems to be introduced as by way of contrast; exhibiting, as it does, his love of the Scriptures and of the truth, his simple and earnest faith, and readiness to follow the light, and profess the gospel as soon as he understood it. We see, also, that his color and his country made him of none the less value in the sight of the Infinite Father; for he commissioned his servant specially to meet and instruct him; and, as is supposed, made him an instrument of spreading the gospel in his own benighted country.

29. *The Spirit said unto Philip.* By which some understand the angel, ver. 26; but the more general and probable interpretation is, that he received a spiritual suggestion or

internal prompting. The whole passage bears the traces of a miraculous interposition.—*Join thyself to this chariot.* The first intimation, ver. 26, was general; this one was particular. He is commanded to seek the acquaintance of the Ethiopian.

30, 31. *Philip ran.* Showing the promptness with which he complied with the divine monition.—*Heard him read.* As he was reading aloud. Ver. 28.—*Understandest thou what thou readest?* This question seemed to be dictated by a knowledge of his state of mind, and of the aid which was about to be communicated to enable him to understand the word of God. The inquiry might have been uttered with such a tone, as to indicate at once an interest and an ability to communicate the needed instruction.—*How can I, except some man, &c.* With frankness and humility the eunuch replied to the question, in terms which confessed his ignorance and need of guidance. He carried in his swarthy bosom a truth-loving and truth-seeking disposition. And while many a learned doctor of the law was unvisited by any special messenger of salvation, to this humble-minded African was granted an inspired teacher to enlighten his ignorance, and guide his soul in the way of truth and peace.

32, 33. *Place of the scripture.* Is. liii. 7, 8. It is quoted, not from the

34 tion ? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the 35 prophet this ? of himself, or of some other man ? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached

Hebrew, but from the Greek, version, or Septuagint, which was probably employed by the eunuch. The variations in the sense are inconsiderable and unimportant. The passage is thus rendered by Noyes, in his version of Isaiah : —

“ As a lamb, that is led to the slaughter,  
And as a sheep before her shearers is dumb,  
He opened not his mouth.  
By oppression and punishment he was taken  
away,  
And who of that generation would consider  
That he was cut off from the land of the  
living ? ”

— *He was led as a sheep, &c.* By which was described the meekness and submission with which he yielded to his sufferings and death. No more vivid images of an uncomplaining resignation could be adduced than those of the lamb, dumb before the butcher, and of the sheep, silent before its shearer. When Jesus was unjustly accused, he uttered no reproaches against his enemies ; but bore all their insults and indignities with patience and composure, and committed himself to Him who judgeth righteously. — *In his humiliation.* In his lowly and depressed condition, in his extreme distress. — *His judgment was taken away.* A just trial and sentence was denied him. His condemnation was extorted. He was unjustly condemned and put to death. — *Who shall declare his generation ?* This clause has afforded matter for a great variety of opinions among interpreters ; some understanding it, Who shall declare the duration of his kingdom, which is to be perpetual ? or, Who can describe his spiritual posterity ? or, Who can portray the wickedness of that generation by which he was put

to death ? The last exposition seems, on the whole, preferable. The idea was, to represent in powerful terms the injustice and depravity of the men of that period, and the exclamation of the text was fitted to convey that impression. — *For his life is taken from the earth.* That life, so precious and so pure, is taken from the earth by injustice and violence. What greater proof could there be of the deep-dyed guilt of that generation ? As has been observed, “ Had Isaiah been writing a history of Jesus of Nazareth, he could not have drawn a more vivid and accurate portrait than is presented ” here of the submission of Christ, and the malignity of his enemies. It would seem that no doubt could exist, as to its application to the case of the Messiah, for Philip immediately proceeds to employ it in that sense, and thence to preach Jesus to the Ethiopian. Taking, however, both of the last clauses together, as a friend suggests, it would seem not improbable that the prophet was speaking of the manner in which men would regard the Messiah’s death. They would say, “ No generation of disciples shall succeed : there is a perpetual end to his dispensation. He has come and gone ; who is left to declare his generation ? for his life is taken away, and all hope extinguished in the tomb.”

34, 35. *Answered.* Rather, “ addressed.” — *Of whom speaketh the prophet, &c.* He wished to ascertain the identity of the person spoken of by Isaiah, and the individual to whom he referred. The readiness with which the eunuch unfolded his difficulties to his spiritual adviser,

unto him Jesus. And as they went on *their way*, they came 36 unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou 37 believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and

indicated the truth-seeking spirit by which he was prompted. It is said that the ancient Jewish writers understood the passage as referable to the Messiah; but, in later times, to evade the force of the prophetical argument, it has been applied to Isaiah or Jeremiah, or to some other prophet.—*Began at the same scripture.* By which is directly implied that that passage itself referred to Jesus Christ. Luke xxiv. 27, 44–46. —*Preached unto him Jesus.* By which is meant the truth of Jesus, the name of the person standing for the name of his religion. The principal point of course was, to identify Jesus as the predicted and expected Messiah, the Son of God. Ver. 37. In addition to this main object of establishing the essential truth of the Messiahship, it would appear, from ver. 36, that he enjoined the profession of the Christian faith, and a compliance with its ordinances.

36. *A certain water.* What this water was, can only be inferred from the nature of the country and the testimony of travellers and others. It is a region, however, in which, as is well known, there are no large bodies or streams of water. Eusebius says, “It was a fountain in the neighborhood of Bethsora, in the tribe of Judah, between Jerusalem and Hebron.” Jerome, also, who had visited the place, says, “that the water gushes up at the foot of a hill, and is soon reabsorbed in the ground.” Brocard remarks, “that the pool is so shallow that a camel will drink it to muddiness.” Sandys says, “Gaza is situated in a bottom between two rocky mountains; and here I saw the ruins of an ample

church, and below that a fountain, whose pleasant waters are forthwith drank up by the earth which produced them. Here, they say, Philip baptized the Ethiopian eunuch, whereupon it retaineth the name of ‘the Ethiopian fountain;’ and no question but the adjoining temple was erected out of devotion to the honor of the place and memory of the fact.” Maundrell and Pococke have also described the place. Dr. Harris, a worthy authority in such investigations, and who collected the above passages, says, “It was this shallowness of the fountain which makes this reference to it interesting, by indicating that the baptism could not have been by immersion.”—*What doth hinder me, &c.* By which it appears that the eunuch had been instructed in the duty of Christian baptism and profession, incumbent on those who believed in Jesus as the Messiah. Chap. ii. 38, 41. The spirit which he manifested is worthy of all imitation—honest, prompt, and devoted. Chap. xxii. 16. “And now, why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”

37. *Believest with all thine heart.* “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Rom. x. 10. The evangelist enjoins as essential, not simply the assent of the intellect, or the faith of the understanding, but the earnest trust of the heart.—*I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.* Or, as it would be better rendered, that Jesus, the Christ, is the Son of God; or that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. The simplicity of this ancient pro-

38 said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized 39 him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no

fection is worthy of especial notice. "How short and simple was the faith of Christians in those times! Happy would it have been for the church, if no more articles of faith had been added to this creed!" — This verse is, however, according to Griesbach and the best critics, of so doubtful authority, not being found in many of the ancient manuscripts, that they have rejected it from the text.

38. *They went down both into the water.* Or, more properly, *to* the water, for the preposition does not necessarily signify *into*. All believe that they went down *to* the water, and some think that they entered *into* it. That depends upon what was the mode of baptism. If by sprinkling, it was only necessary to advance to the water's brink; if by affusion, or water being poured upon the head, as some ancient painters represent, they would probably go into the water; or if by immersion, they would do the same. If, now, we consider the object of the ordinance of baptism, as symbolic of repentance, purification, and self-consecration to the cause of Christ, the fulfilment of this object most evidently depends, not upon the manner, but the spirit, with which the ceremony is performed, provided the manner is decent and proper; just as the efficacious observance of the Lord's supper does not consist in the time, the manner, the posture of the communicants, the precise quality of the elements, or any other extrinsic appendages, but in the spirit of Christian faith and love, and devotion to the cross, with which this

beautiful festival is observed. "In the arrangements for conducting the services, and administering the rites, of religion, all modern denominations vary from the primitive forms, as times, climates, manners, and customs, vary."

39. *When they were come up out of the water.* Or, *from* the water, would be equally proper. — *The Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip.* By which has sometimes been understood, that the evangelist was caught away and borne through the air to Azotus. 1 Kings xviii. 12; 2 Kings ii. 16. But the more rational interpretation is, that he was led quickly away by an intimation of the Spirit, or by a divine instinct or prompting that he should not pursue the journey farther with the Ethiopian nobleman, but turn back to the scenes of duty in other directions. — *Saw him no more.* Because he had withdrawn, on his return to his family and brethren. — *And he went on his way rejoicing.* Literally, and better, *for* he went on, &c. That is the reason why the eunuch saw him no more. The joy which he felt naturally arose from the new and precious light which he had received, and the blessed faith which he had professed; for there are no deeper springs of happiness capable of being opened in the human soul than those of truth and duty. Eusebius, in his Ecclesiastical History, relates that the Ethiopian, "becoming the first fruits of believers throughout the world, is said to have been the first, on returning to his country, that proclaimed the knowledge of God, and the saving abode of our Saviour among men.

more: and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found 40 at Azotus: and passing through, he preached in all the cities, till he came to Cesarea.

So that, in fact, the prophecy obtained its fulfilment through him. ‘Ethiopia stretched forth her hands unto God.’” Ps. lxviii. 31. But this testimony, though corroborated by Ireneus, Cyril, and Jerome, is deemed by many as a mere tradition, unworthy of much credit. For it is, furthermore, said that the Christian religion was not preached, at least extensively, in that country, until the fourth century, when it was introduced by Frumentius, delegated for that object by Athanasius, the bishop of Alexandria in Egypt.

40. *Was found.* As observed by Bloomfield, “The air of the expression seems to refer to the *rapt feeling* with which Philip left the eunuch and went to Azotus.”—*Azotus.* This was one of the ancient cities of the Philistines, lying about 30 miles south of Gaza, and called in Hebrew *Ashdod*. Josh. xv. 47; 1 Sam. vi. 17. It is a seaport on the shores of the Mediterranean. It underwent many changes in the wars between the Jews and other nations, being captured by the Assyrians, Is. xx. 1, by Judas Maccabæus, 1 Macc. v. 68, burned by Jonathan, his brother, 1 Macc. x. 84, and rebuilt by the Roman general Gabinius. Its modern name is *Es-dud*. Robinson says, “It was pointed out to us, upon a low, round eminence, with trees thick around it, like a wood, probably olives. There are said to be no ruins; and the place seems now to be only an ordinary Moslem village.”—*He preached in all the cities.* There lay on the shores of the Mediterranean, or at a short distance from it, the towns of Jamnia, Joppa, Gilgal, Lydda, and others.—*Cesarea.* This city is to be distinguished from Cesarea Phi-

lippi, in Galilee. It was in Judea, on the sea-shore, and about 60 miles north-west from Jerusalem, and about 90 north from Azotus. Its ancient name was *Strato's Tower*. Herod the Great enlarged the city, and named it *Cesarea*, in honor of Augustus Cesar, the Roman emperor. It contained a fine harbor, many most splendid temples, palaces, and other edifices. The inhabitants were chiefly Greeks. It was the seat of the Roman governor, and became the capital of Palestine after the overthrow of the holy city. Chap. xxiii. 23, 33. Its present ruined aspect presents a striking lesson of the instability of human pomp and power, when it is considered that it was once one of the most magnificent cities in the Eastern world. Philip returned to Cesarea because it was the abode of his family. Chap. xxi. 8.

This chapter opens with a history of the dangers which beset the church in the persecution following the death of Stephen, and especially the formidable character of one of the persecutors. So young, so vigorous, and powerful an enemy seemed to threaten the entire extinction of the rising cause of Christianity. But we shall learn, in the next chapter, how feeble and vain is the power of man, however learned, zealous, and influential, in contending against truth and the Author of truth.

The persecution of the Christian flock, too, was overruled for greater good; for their dispersion scattered, far and near, the seeds of divine truth, and enlarged the boundaries of the Saviour's kingdom. ‘So, in the wise and beneficent providence of God, is good educated out of evil. The Almighty makes the wrath of

## CHAPTER IX.

*The Conversion of Saul, and the Miracles of Peter.*

**AND** Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against

man praise him, and the remainder of wrath he will restrain.

In Simon Magus, we behold a new, and even more fatal, enemy rising up against Christianity; for the violent persecutor cannot do so much mischief as the secret corrupter. The former lops off the perhaps diseased branches of a vigorous tree; while the other infuses a deadly sap into every pore and leaf, producing a gradual decay and ruin. In Simon appeared first the incipient form of that many-branched corruption which overspread the Christian church, and for ages made "a gain of godliness," used the holy name of Christ to subserve the worst purposes of party and power, and sold the gifts of Heaven, and the sanctities of the Spirit of the living God, for "filthy lucre."

But in the Ethiopian eunuch, there is witnessed that beautiful simplicity of faith, that single honesty of purpose, and prompt devotion to truth and duty, which present a pleasing contrast to the rage of the bigoted persecutor, and the guile of the sordid magician. So in all ages has there been a holy conservative influence, in the midst of the elements of persecution on one side, and of corruption on the other. There have ever been the faithful, few or many, who have served God with true hearts, and left behind memories embalmed in every virtue. Be these our study and our inspiration. The most distant martyr that ever died for the sake of Jesus, the humblest disciple that has been enrolled in the book of life, go to make a part of that pure galaxy of light and glory, by which our moral heavens are illuminated, and the morning

star of our faith attended on its triumphant and brightening course.

## CHAPTER IX.

This chapter contains one of the most interesting and important events in the early history of Christianity—the conversion of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles. This change, from the most untiring persecutor of the church to its zealous advocate and martyr, is a remarkable proof of the truth and divine origin of the gospel, and shows that a more than mortal hand was stretched out to guard and guide the Christian flock.

1. *Saul.* He is before introduced as keeping the clothes of the witnesses at the death of Stephen, chap. vii. 58, and as an active persecutor of the disciples. Chap. viii. 1, 3. His history is here resumed, and, with some exceptions, constitutes the chief substance of the remaining chapters of this book. He was a native of Tarsus, the capital of Cilicia, was educated at Jerusalem under Gamaliel, and possessed great abilities, both natural and acquired, unconquerable zeal, quick perception, brilliant imagination, never-wearied perseverance, warm affections, ardent piety, immense power, both of resolution and endurance, and the best learning of his time and country. The acquisition of such a man, in the energy of opening manhood, from the side of the enemy, was not unworthy of divine interposition. — *Yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter.* He was not content with the death of Stephen, the dispersion of the disciples, and the abundant evil he had already effected; but he still continued to breathe the most implacable hostility. As in chap. viii.

the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high-priest, and desired 2 of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found

3, he is said to make havoc, like a wild beast, of the church, so here he is represented as breathing threatenings and slaughter; or, as some prefer, laying aside the idiom, threatenings of slaughter, the most sanguinary spirit. Similar phrases are used by ancient authors. Thus Homer speaks of "the Greeks breathing strength." Theocritus uses a similar phrase, "They came into the assembly breathing mutual slaughter;" also, Euripides speaks of one "breathing out fire and slaughter." Saul was filled with the most deadly hatred, and unquenchable zeal, against the followers of Jesus. There was no persecutor so furious, and in every respect so formidable, and none, therefore, so desirable to gain, as a convert to Christianity. Chap. xxvi. 10 - 12. — *Went unto the high-priest.* The high-priest, as president of the Sanhedrim, the Jewish council, would sign the letters, ver. 2, or commission, issued in their name and authority. The office of high-priest was at that time held, as has been supposed, by Theophilus, a son of Annas, or Ananas, chap. iv. 6, who was substituted for his brother Jonathan, the previous incumbent, by Vitellius, governor of Syria, as Josephus relates in his *Antiquities*, L. 18, chap. 7.

2. *Desired of him letters*, i. e. credentials from the council, empowering him to act in behalf of their jurisdiction. — *Damascus.* A city in Cœle-Syria, distinguished for its antiquity, splendor, and opulence. It is situated on the River Chrysorrhœas, or Barradi, in a delightful plain, south-east of the mountains of Anti-Libanus. Gen. xiv. 15. It is about 140 miles north-east from Jerusalem. The surrounding country is fertile, the climate one of the most

pleasant in the world, so that it has been called "the paradise on earth." It has in all ages been a great mart of internal commerce, and a rendezvous for numerous caravans. It has undergone the terrible devastations of war, and been the theatre of battles and sieges innumerable. It is from this city that the Damascus steel, the goods called *damasks*, and roses and fruit-trees of the same name, receive their designation. The present population is estimated at from one to two hundred thousand, consisting of Muhammedans, Christians, and Jews. It is now called *Damasc*, or *Demesch*. Carne, the traveller, says that "The celebrated plain of roses, from the produce of which the rich perfume, ottar of roses, is obtained, is about three miles from the town. The place called 'the Meeting of the Waters,' is about five miles to the north-west of the city. Here the River Barradi, which may be the ancient Abana, being enlarged by another river which falls into it, about two miles off, is divided into several streams, which flow through the plain. The separation is the result of art. The streams, six or seven in number, are, some of them, carried to water the orchards and gardens of the higher grounds, others into the lower; but all meet at last close to the city, and form the fine cataract." The ancient road from Jerusalem runs near Damascus, between two mountains, lying near together; one of which is called *Cocab*, "the star," and the other *Medawer, El Cocab*, "the circle of light," in commemoration of the dazzling splendor which shone around Paul. Ver. 3. — *To the synagogues.* The Jews at this time were very numerous in Damascus; for Josephus states that, at different

any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might 3 bring them bound unto Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about 4 him a light from heaven; and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

times, ten thousand and eighteen thousand were slaughtered at once in the city. The Sanhedrim possessed great control over all the Jews, resident in foreign countries. In what veneration it was held may be inferred, says Lightfoot, from this — that “The rule and determination concerning intercalating the year, concerning the beginning of the year, and the appointed time of the feasts, &c., came from it; as also that it was esteemed a keeper and repository of the oral law.” — *Of this way*, i. e. of this party or persuasion, the Christians. Chap. xix. 9, 23, xxiv. 14. — *Men or women*. Showing the indiscriminate and unsparing cruelty which animated his proceedings. — *Might bring them bound unto Jerusalem*. That they might be tried by the Sanhedrim. However protected by the civil authorities of the countries in which they resided, the Jews were yet bound, by a certain religious allegiance, to the ecclesiastical tribunal in the holy city. The synagogues were answerable to the Sanhedrim. If, as has been supposed, Aretas, king of Arabia, was ruler at Damascus at this time, he would throw no obstructions in the way of Jewish power over their own believers; since, if not a proselyte, he was a favorer of the Jews. Or, even under the Roman government, the authority of the high-priest would probably have encountered no impediment in the execution of his plans, so far as ecclesiastical affairs were concerned. The Sanhedrim took cognizance of the claims of religious teachers and prophets, and of all that concerned the purity or

diffusion of their faith abroad, no less than at home.

3. *He came near Damascus*. The spot is still pointed out by the credulous where this event occurred, near the city of Damascus, and the superstition of the pilgrim has delighted in carrying away some token from the place; but the identity of the particular locality is quite doubtful. — *Suddenly there shined round about him, &c.* The suddenness of the appearance has led some to confound it with a flash of lightning, but there is no intimation of any such natural phenomenon. Every circumstance in the narrative proclaims an extraordinary occasion, unlike any common manifestation of the elements. The time was noon, chap. xxii. 6, when the senses would be least likely to be deceived; Paul was in company with others, which would also diminish the opportunity of mistake, ver. 7; the light is represented as surpassing the splendor of noonday, chap. xxii. 6, xxvi. 13: thus every particular bespeaks the impossibility of any illusion of the eye or ear, and of any other than the certainty of a divine interposition.

4. *Heard a voice*. The absurdity of supposing that the light and voice were any terrific natural phenomena, acting upon the fears and fancies of Paul, has been well set forth by Bloomfield. A dialogue is represented as being held, and the Hebrew language used. Chap. xxvi. 14. His attendants were rendered speechless, ver. 7, though there is no evidence that they were under the influence of any high-wrought emotions, favorable to an illusion. The

And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am 5 Jesus whom thou persecutest. *It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.* And he trembling, and astonished, said, Lord, what 6

voice is not called thunder, but articulate speech; and the light is not called lightning, but a brightness above that of the sun.—*Saul, Saul.* Expressive of earnest address. Luke x. 41, xxii. 31; Mat. xxiii. 37.—*Why persecutest thou me?* Though Saul was acting in the name of the highpriests and Sanhedrim, his agency was seen to be a primary moving cause, and he was addressed individually; while, on the other hand, though he was engaged in hunting after the lives of the disciples, Jesus identified himself as the chief mark at which the persecution was aimed. To persecute his disciples, he considered as persecuting himself, Mat. xxv. 45; and to aid his followers, he graciously accepted as service done personally to him.

5. *Who art thou, Lord?* Kenrick remarks, that “The ready answer which Saul gives to the question proposed to him, shows that he could not be struck to the ground by lightning; for that deprives men of the use of their mental faculties, as well as of their sight.” By *Lord*, Saul means simply to use a word of address, which is frequently translated *sir*, John iv. 19, for he was not yet aware of the dignity of the individual who spoke to him.—*I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.* In chap. xxii. 8, the despised designation was added, “of Nazareth.” It is apparent that Christ appeared personally to the apostle, as if to qualify him for his new office. 1 Cor. ix. 1, xv. 8, 9. Whether he had seen Jesus during his life is not known, but is mere field of conjecture.—*It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.* Or, it is impossible for thee to kick against the goads. These were sticks pointed with sharp iron, used in driving

oxen. See Judg. iii. 31; 1 Sam. xiii. 21. The expression is proverbial, and is found in many ancient writers. The sense of it is, that it is folly to attempt to resist a power, when, by resistance, injury follows only to him who makes it; as the restive ox that kicks against the goad of the driver only injures himself. Euripides says, “I, who am a frail mortal, should rather sacrifice to him who is a God, than, by giving place to anger, kick against the goads.” *Æschylus* gives the injunction, “Kick not against the goads.” Pindar, likewise, — “It is profitable to bear willingly the assumed yoke; to kick against the goads is pernicious conduct.” The sense is clear: Saul, by resisting the cause of Christ and God, was only wounding himself; as has been said, “He that strikes the adamant is himself stricken; and he that kicks the goads is himself goaded.” His attack upon the church would only recoil upon himself in a terrible retribution. Such is the eternal law. He who resists the cause of truth, is himself visited with the inflictions he would heap upon others. Mat. xvi. 18; Acts v 39. Such is the condition of all who suppress the admonitions of conscience, and resist the will of God. They dash themselves against sharp spikes, and are thrown back wounded, bleeding, dying. The way of transgressors is emphatically hard. It should be stated that the last clause of this verse, with the first of the next until the word *arise*, is omitted by Griesbach and other critics, who suppose that it was probably foisted into the text here from the parallel passage in chap. xxii. 10, xxvi. 14, where it occurs.

6. *Trembling and astonished.* He trembled under the reproaches of a

wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. 7 And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. And Saul arose from the earth;

wounded spirit, and was astonished at the sudden apparition which burst upon his view, and arrested his evil career.—*Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* Saul elsewhere declared that he sinned ignorantly and in unbelief, verily thinking that he was doing God service by persecuting the Christians. Hence, as soon as the path of duty was pointed out to him, he showed a readiness to walk in it. His sin had been ignorance, a blind adherence to an unenlightened conscience, a dogged submission to his old Jewish prejudices and bigotry. But when light from heaven flashed upon him, though it blinded his physical sight, it shone into the darkened chambers of his mind, and showed him what manner of spirit he was of, and converted him from the error of his way. There is no evidence that any miracle was wrought upon the mind of Saul, but only externally. The supernatural cause produced a natural result, in awakening his wonder, presenting new evidence to his understanding, and addressing new motives to his heart. No parallel can be drawn between the change of Paul and modern cases of conversion to Christianity. He was arrested in his course for a greater object than his mere individual benefit; and his fidelity to his sense of right, though dark and degraded, seemed yet to furnish a ground for the reward granted him, in having a special interposition to snatch him from destruction. At this day, we can expect only the natural influences of the divine Spirit; and to wait for miracles, is to abandon one's self to ruin.—*Go into the city*, i. e. Damascus, at which they had now nearly

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arrived. Ver. 3.—*It shall be told thee, &c.* In the first emotions of an agitated mind, possessed of the strong passions of Saul, it was no time to communicate information respecting his duty. We see, in the gradualness even of his sudden conversion, a careful compliance with the great laws of the human soul, and an adaptation to its wants.

7. *Stood speechless.* They had arisen after falling to the earth, and remained speechless from amazement. There is an apparent discrepancy, if we compare these words with chap. xxvi. 14; but it is only apparent; for at first they had fallen to the ground with the terror produced by the instantaneous flash of light, and the noise succeeding or accompanying it.—*Hearing a voice.* But in chap. xxii. 9, it is expressly said, “They heard not the voice that spake to me.” These clauses may be reconciled, either by understanding the word to signify, in this instance, the simple act of *hearing*, and in the other that of *understanding*; or by regarding the voice to mean here mere sound, as it sometimes does, and in the other instance an articulate speech, whose meaning they could distinguish. But both methods, in reality, amount to the same thing.—*Seeing no man.* The only object they witnessed was a general brilliant light; but we may infer, from ver. 17, 27, chap. xxii. 14; 1 Cor. ix. 1, xv. 8, that Paul actually beheld the form of Jesus at this time.

8, 9. *When his eyes were opened, he saw no man.* What he had seen was not evident to the external sense, but to the mind; and when

and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought *him* into Damascus. And he was 9 three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink. — And 10 there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I *am here*, Lord. And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go 11 into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house

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the excitement was past, and he arose from the earth, he first found that he had been struck blind, and that, though his eyes were capable of being opened, they yielded no sight. The loss of his vision might have been natural, though the cause was supernatural; for it is said, in chap. xxii. 11, to have been produced by the intensity of the light. Where a sufficient cause for any effect is known, it is unphilosophical to assign any additional or greater cause. Such is the fact in relation to the blindness of Saul. But in relation to his conversion, by the same rule, it is philosophical, as well as scriptural, to believe the cause was superhuman; for thus only can the great effect produced be rationally accounted for. — *Three days, &c.* The period for Saul's blindness and fasting was probably only a part of three days, according to the Jewish reckoning. The event occurred on one day; for a whole day he remained without light or food; and on the third he was visited by Ananias. Thus the resurrection of Christ took place after three days, i. e. after the third day began. The condition of Saul was highly favorable to uninterrupted and serious meditation. He had been suddenly arrested in his furious career. He had heard the words of that Messiah, whose disciples he was dragging to prison and to death. It was the crisis of his moral being, the dread pause between good and evil, life and death. It was well that external objects

were excluded for a season, that his thoughts might turn inward upon themselves, that he might take a new reckoning on the sea of life, and mature the exercises of a devout and deeply contrite, yet hopeful and resolute spirit, bent upon doing with its might whatever it found to do. To fast, under such circumstances, was not an obedience to custom, but a dictate of nature.

10. *A certain disciple*, i. e. a Jewish convert to Christianity. His excellent character is described in chap. xxii. 12. It has been conjectured, but without any historical evidence, that he was one of the seventy missionaries appointed by Christ. Luke x. 1. Nothing is further known of him than what is introduced in this connexion. He was immortalized by his participation in these events in the life of him, who was at once the greatest enemy and the greatest friend to Christianity. — *In a vision.* Whether in sleep or not, is left undetermined. Suffice it to say, it was a supernatural suggestion, shown to be so by the fact, that communications were made directly contrary to the opinions and feelings of Ananias. — *Behold, I am here, Lord.* Words which attested his cheerful readiness to obey the mandates of Heaven, whatever they might be. Gen. xxxi. 11; 1 Sam. iii. 4. Our obedience, to be acceptable to God, must be not only complete, but prompt and cheerful.

11. *Street which is called Straight.* The inhabitants profess to identify

of Judas for *one* called Saul of Tarsus: for behold, he prayeth, 12 and hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias, coming in, and 13 putting *his* hand on him, that he might receive *his* sight. Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how 14 much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: and here he

this street and other sacred localities, even to the present day. Thus Carne says that "The street, still called *Straight*, and where St. Paul is with reason said to have lived, is entered by the road from Jerusalem. It is as straight as an arrow, a mile in length, broad, and well paved. A lofty window in one of the towers to the east, is shown us as the place where the apostle was let down in a basket. In the way to Jerusalem is the spot where his course was arrested by the light from heaven." Maundrell, also, in his Journey, says, "This morning we went to see the street called *Straight*. It is about half a mile in length, running from east to west through the city. It being narrow, and the houses jutting out in several places on both sides, you cannot have a clear prospect of its length and straightness. In this street is shown the house of Judas, with whom Paul lodged; and in the same house is an old tomb, said to be Ananias's; but how he should come to be buried here they could not tell us, nor could we guess, his own house being shown us in another place. However, the Turks have a reverence for this tomb, and maintain a lamp always burning over it." — *Judas*. Nothing is further known of this individual, except the present record. — *Saul of Tarsus*. Tarsus was a city of Asia Minor, the capital of Cilicia, distinguished for its literature and Grecian philosophy; and, on account of its numerous schools and learned men, was ranked with Athens and Alexandria, or even preferred before them. On account of the services which this place ren-

dered in the civil wars and commotions, it was made free by Augustus, the Roman emperor, and enjoyed certain peculiar immunities; and it has been supposed by some, though doubted by others, that its inhabitants enjoyed the privileges of Roman citizenship. — *Behold, he prayeth*. As it were, a general designation of the ruling sentiment of Paul's mind at the time, as devotional and supplicatory. The spirit of wrath and headlong zeal was laid aside. He assumed an humbler, and more penitential attitude, more appropriate to the sinfulness of his past life, and significant of the holy and beautiful office he was henceforth to discharge, as an awakener of devotion in multitudes of hearts in all ages. The fervor of his Epistles teaches us what was the fervor of his prayers.

12. *Hath seen in a vision*. As remarked by Farmer, "Saul, though now blind, saw Ananias as clearly, in representation or vision, as he did when he appeared to him visibly, upon the recovery of his sight. This is one proof, amongst many others, that the miraculous scenes of a vision were not always, if ever, placed before the bodily eye, but were discerned by the mind without the assistance of the corporeal organ." The correspondence between the two visions evinces their common and divine source. — *That he might receive his sight*. The restoration of his sight was one of the first and most palpable blessings he could receive.

13, 14. *I have heard by many*. It was common report that Saul was the most formidable persecutor of

hath authority from the chief-priests, to bind all that call on thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how 16

the Christian body.—*To thy saints.* By which is meant simply the disciples of Christ, without reference to moral character or peculiar sanctity of mind. Under the Jewish dispensation, all who were embraced in the covenant of God's people were called *saints*, not out of respect to their absolute goodness, but their relative privileges as compared with the surrounding idolaters. Thus, under the reign of Christ, those were designated by the same title who had become converted from Judaism and heathenism, irrespective of their proficiency in the divine life. They had become, as it were, ceremonially clean and holy, as the Jews had formerly been, and were entitled to the epithet in question. The term, in both cases, “denotes what is *supposed to be* the case in persons so designated, and suggests what they *ought to be*.”—*Heath authority, &c.* Ver. 2, chap. viii. 3. Information had apparently been communicated, in advance, to the Christians at Damascus to prepare for the onset of Saul among them, who was coming empowered with ample ecclesiastical authority, and raging, like a beast of prey, to seize his unhappy victims.—*That call on thy name.* A mistaken rendering, conveying an unauthorized inference. Since *thy* refers back to *Lord*, and *Lord* refers to Jesus, it has been concluded that the disciples were termed those who invoked or prayed to Christ. But the participle can be taken, indifferently, either as the passive voice, signifying those *called after thy name*, or surnamed after thee; or middle voice, signifying those that *called themselves after thy name*. Acts xv. 17. This is, there-

fore, an appellation of Christians, and not a statement of the object to which their religious worship was directed. In these two verses, Ananias indirectly expresses his fears of encountering the terrible persecutor, as if some stratagem had been laid to decoy him into the jaws of destruction.

15. *He is a chosen vessel unto me.* Literally, a vessel of choice. So far from Ananias shrinking from an interview with Saul, he was enjoined to seek it, as the means of advancing in the highest degree the cause he had most at heart. Saul was to be a chosen vessel—a figurative expression, implying that he would be eminently useful in promoting the religion of Jesus. Gal. i. 1. The Jewish, Greek, and Roman writers were accustomed to this phrase. Polybius says of Damocles, that “He was a useful instrument, and fit for the management of affairs.”—*To bear.* Still continuing the figurative expression of *the vessel*, in which any thing might be carried from place to place.—*Gentiles—kings—the children of Israel.* The prediction was fulfilled: Saul became the bearer of the glad tidings of the gospel to the heathen world, the apostle to the Gentiles. Chap. xxii. 21; Rom. xi. 13, xv. 16. He advocated the cause of Christianity before kings and rulers, and the great men of the earth, chaps. xxv. xxvi. xxvii., and it was uniformly his practice to make the first appeal to his own brethren. Chap. xiv. 1, xvii. 1, 2.

16. *How great things he must suffer.* One reason why Ananias need not dread to approach the once terrific persecutor of his brethren, was,

17 great things he must suffer for my name's sake. — And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house: and putting his hands on him, said, Brother Saul, the Lord (*even* Jesus that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest) hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. And when he had received meat, he was strengthened.

— Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were

ver. 15, that he had been specially selected as a mighty agent in promoting Christianity: another reason is alleged in this verse, viz., that he was to give the ultimate proof of his sincerity and devotedness by suffering, and greatly suffering, in behalf of the gospel. Some understand that a special revelation, by vision or otherwise, would be made to Saul of his future sufferings and martyrdom; others, that Christ would give an example in him of what ought to be cheerfully undergone for the sake of human salvation; that he would prove an illustrious evidence how much men could and ought to endure for so excellent an object. Whichever method is admitted, it affects not the general fact of the uncommon endurance of the apostle to the Gentiles, and of the mountains of toil, and pain, and affliction, which oppressed, but could not crush, his indomitable spirit. Chap. xx. 23, xxv. 11; 1 Cor. xv. 10, 19; 2 Cor. xi. 23-28; 2 Tim. iii. 10-12.

17. *Putting his hands on him.* In the way of conferring a blessing, agreeably to Oriental custom, Mat. xix. 13, not as a peculiar ceremony, essential to ordination and induction into the ministerial office. If the theory of ecclesiastical government held by some be true, it would seem to be necessary that the hands of the apostles, and not those of a mere private Christian, should be laid upon the head of Paul; though it may be

claimed that that was done, chap. xiii. 3, yet that act was not apparently apostolic, and Saul had previously exercised the office of a Christian preacher. Ver. 20, 22, 29. — *Brother Saul.* The fraternal designation, to indicate his reception into the Christian brotherhood, and the confidence reposed in his conversion. — *Even.* This word is not in the original, and is entirely superfluous. — *That appeared unto thee.* Implying the personal appearance of the Saviour to his new convert. — *Receive thy sight — filled with the Holy Ghost.* Ananias was advanced, on this occasion, to the high honor of being the medium to communicate a miraculous cure and spiritual influence, such as elsewhere devolved upon the apostles. Probably he gave other instructions at this time, which are not recorded, adapted to Saul's condition and calling. Chap. xxii. 12-16.

18, 19. *There fell from his eyes as it had been scales.* It is not said, or probably intended, as some interpreters have taken it, that scales literally fell from his eyes, but that the recovery of his sight took place, as if scales had dropped from the organs of vision. The restoration of sight was instantaneous. No natural remedies were applied to heal him. Ananias had been specially commissioned for this cure and spiritual communication, and no doubt, therefore, is left that though the blindness was naturally produced,

at Damascus. And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. But all that heard *him* were amazed, and said, Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that

yet that the restoration was miraculous.—*Arose and was baptized.* Baptism was ever the initiatory ceremony to a profession of the faith of Christ. Chap. ii. 38, 41, iii. 19, xvi. 33. The rite was administered in this case, as is probable, by Ananias, a private Christian,—a significant fact for those to consider, who insist upon an apostolical succession, and assert the maxim, “No bishop, no church;” or for those who deem no baptism as valid unless administered, not by lay, but by clerical, hands.—*Received meat*, i. e. any kind of food. He had fasted three days, ver. 9, and the scenes through which he had passed had exhausted his strength, so that the expression, “He took food, and was revived,” is not thrown in without meaning.—*Certain days with the disciples.* Rather, some days, &c. He who had come on a mission of destruction became a confidant and helper to the very cause he intended to overthrow. His intercourse with the disciples was seemingly necessary, in order to instruct him in the truths of Christianity, and prepare him for his ministry.

The conversion of St. Paul has ever been regarded, as a powerful argument in support of the Christian religion, as a divine revelation. So impressed was Lyttleton with the force of this argument, that he wrote an epistolical essay, in which he advocated that “The conversion and apostleship of St. Paul alone, duly considered, was of itself a demonstration sufficient to prove the truth” of the above proposition. In that work he abundantly shows, that Paul “could have been neither an impos-

tor, who said what he knew to be false with an intent to deceive; or an enthusiast, who, by the force of an overheated imagination, imposed on himself, or was deceived by the fraud of others: but that what he declared to have been the cause of his conversion, and what happened in consequence of it, did all really occur, and that therefore the gospel was a revelation from Heaven.” This selection of a single point in the great argument possesses some advantages, by concentrating attention in a single direction, and excluding all secondary considerations. Milman remarks, that “No event in Christian history, from its improbability, as well as its influence on the progress of the religion, would so demand, if the expression may be used, the divine intervention, as the conversion of St. Paul. Paul was essentially necessary to the development of the Christian scheme. To doubt, in whatever manner it took place, his divine mission, would be to discard all providential interposition in the design and propagation of Christianity.”

20, 21. *Straightway.* The ardor of Paul’s temperament did not allow him to delay the great work, to which he had been so wonderfully summoned.—*Christ—that he is the Son of God.* Griesbach and many others approve the reading, “Jesus—the Son of God.” For no one doubted that Christ, or the Messiah, would be the Son of God. But the critical point was, to show that Jesus was identical with the Son of God, the Messiah. Chap. ii. 36, viii. 37. The synagogues afforded a fine field for introducing the doctrines of Christianity

22 he might bring them bound unto the chief-priests ? But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which 23 dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ. — And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill 24 him. But their laying await was known of Saul. And they 25 watched the gates day and night to kill him. Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.

directly to numerous bodies of Jewish worshippers. — *Were amazed.* Their astonishment was perfectly natural, from the circumstances of the case, and showed that the change which had taken place was capable of being explained on no common grounds. — *Called on this name.* See note on ver. 14.

22. *Saul increased, &c.* His conversion was sudden, and there was consequently great room for the improvement, both of his intellectual conceptions and his moral convictions of the truth. — *Confounded.* Or perplexed, or confuted, the Jewish disputants. — *Is very Christ.* More correctly translated, “ is the Christ,” since the word rendered *very* is the definite article in the original.

Between the junction of these two verses, 22 and 23, is supposed to be a chasm of three years, Gal. i. 18, in which Saul withdrew from his former associates and resorts, and retired into Arabia ; where he received divine revelations, and, in the exercises of prayer and meditation, and the duties of benevolence to the many Jews dwelling there, nursed the spirit of the gospel in his heart to strength and maturity, and came forth fully prepared to discharge his sublime mission of benevolence. How he passed his time he does not inform us ; but we can easily see how beautiful was this retirement and repose to so fiery a nature as that of Paul ; and how truly such a repose fitted him to preach Christianity, not only with intelligence,

but deep and matured fervor. Some, however, conjecture that the breach in the narrative occurs between the first and last clause of ver. 19. The Arabian frontier approached near Damascus, and Paul may have retired but a short distance from the city, in order to escape the vigilance of his enemies. The omission of this journey by Luke shows that there was no concert between the writers, and, instead of weakening, strengthens, the probability of truth and genuineness.

23. *After that many days.* This is understood to signify the seclusion of three years in Arabia. Gal. i. 18. In 1 Kings ii. 38, 39, we have the precise expression of *many days* equivalent to *three years.* — *The Jews took counsel to kill him.* By which is meant, that they plotted his death, as in chap. xxiii. 12, xxv. 3. The hostility of the Jews evidently arose from his zeal and ability as a Christian apostle, and their anger at his conversion. Force is the only argument which bigotry and malice understand how to use against the friends of truth.

24, 25. *Their laying await was known of Saul.* Or, by Saul, through his own vigilance and quick apprehension, or the information of some kind friend that his life was endangered. — *Watched the gates day and night.* Aretas, king of Arabia Petraea, whose daughter married Herod Antipas, had possession of Damascus at this time, and his administration was favorable to the Jews, and

— And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join 26 himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and

hostile to whoever was obnoxious to them. He made war against Herod, because he divorced his daughter to marry Herodias, the mother of Salome. *Mark vi. 17; 2 Cor. xi. 32.* The text would indicate that a public guard was kept, in order to seize Paul if he should attempt to escape by the gates, which were, of course, the only thoroughfares of the city. — *Let him down by the wall in a basket.* Ancient cities were walled, to protect them against enemies. Probably some friend resided in the house adjoining the wall of Damascus. It appears that Paul was let down through a window in a basket by the side of the wall, and thus avoided passing out at the gates, where he would inevitably have encountered his enemies. *Josh. ii. 15.* There was nothing in this flight inconsistent with Christian courage and loyalty to duty. For the Master himself had directed his apostles not to throw away their lives recklessly, but when persecuted in one city, to flee into another. *Mat. x. 23.* “The method of drawing up or letting down persons in baskets is still very much resorted to in the East, when danger is apprehended from the ordinary mode of ingress or egress. The Christians at Damascus fail not to point out the precise part of the wall where the apostle was let down. It occurs at an old gate in the wall, which has long been walled up, on account of its being rendered of little use by the vicinity of the present eastern gate.” There is probably, however, more of sentiment than of fact in these traditional localities.

26. *When Saul was come to Jerusalem.* This is supposed to have been after his three years' residence in Arabia. *Gal. i. 17, 18.* He had

not, until now, visited Jerusalem since he went forth as a sanguinary persecutor, breathing threatenings and slaughter. How great was the change to himself, to the church, and to the interests of mankind! “Truly, this is the Lord's doing: it is marvellous in our eyes.” — *Assayed.* Or, attempted, endeavored. — *But they were all afraid of him, &c.* It seems unaccountable, at first, that there should have been this fear and suspicion, when Paul had been so long a Christian believer, after being so prominent a persecutor. But Lightfoot has suggested some considerations which help to solve the difficulty; as that the distance between Jerusalem and Damascus was great; that the persecution still continued at Jerusalem which had commenced at the stoning of Stephen, and the disciples of Damascus would be deterred from going thither; the just fears which would possess the disciples at Jerusalem in a time of persecution; and the quarrels subsisting between Herod and Aretas, which would cut off intercourse between the two cities. The retired life of Paul, also, in Arabia, naturally caused a recollection of him to drop out of the minds of the disciples at Jerusalem; and when his name was again mentioned, the old idea of him, as their former greatest enemy, instantly returned, and overpowered, in their minds, any rumor which might have come to their ears of his conversion. This history, like that of the Gospels, is remarkable as simply narrating facts, without drawing inferences or explaining difficulties. The suspicion of the disciples was entirely natural, and proves that there was no collusion between them and the new convert; but, on the contrary, a rigid scrutiny into the reality of his change,

27 believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of 28 Jesus. And he was with them coming in and going out at 29 Jerusalem. And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay 30 him. *Which* when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Cesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.

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and the means by which it was effected.

27. *But Barnabas took him.* Notwithstanding the general distrust, there was one individual who, either on account of former acquaintance, or other unknown reason, gave heed to his story, and yielded him his countenance and aid. Chap. iv. 36, 37, xi. 22-24. — *Brought him to the apostles.* Or, introduced him to them. Saul saw, at this time, only two of them, Peter and James, Gal. i. 18, 19, either because the others were absent from the city, or from the private manner in which they were compelled to live on account of the persecution, and their want of confidence in the reality of his change. — *Declared unto them*, i. e. Barnabas gave a narrative of his miraculous conversion, and subsequent zeal as a preacher of Christianity.

28, 29. *Was with them, coming in and going out.* By which is meant, that he was on terms of confidence and daily intercourse. — *Spake boldly.* By which is expressed, not only the courage, but the freedom and openness, with which he preached the gospel. For instances of the same word, see Acts ii. 29, iv. 13, 29, and other places. — *In the name of the Lord Jesus.* — That name which had been covered with ignominy and reproach, Saul now hesitates not to take up as the glorious watch-word of his preaching, the commanding authority of his duty and labors.

— *The Grecians.* The foreign or Hellenist Jews; by which may be understood both Jews who resided in other countries, and had come to Jerusalem to live, and who used the Greek language and Septuagint version of the Scriptures; and Gentiles, who had become proselytes to Judaism, and removed to the holy city. See note on chap. vi. 1. — *Went about, &c.* i. e. undertook, plotted. The very virulence of his enemies showed how powerful was the preaching of the apostle, and how incapable they were of meeting him on his own ground of argument.

30. *Brought him down to Cesarea.* The disciples, becoming acquainted with the murderous designs of his enemies, follow the commands of Christ, Mat. x. 23, and send him away from danger and death. This was probably Cesarea Philippi, Mat. xvi. 13, and not Cesarea of Palestine, mentioned in chap. viii. 40. — *Sent him forth to Tarsus.* His native city. See note on ver. 11. The course of his journey and the countries he visited, are mentioned in Gal. i. 21, by which it has been inferred that he travelled by land; in which case Cesarea Philippi would lie more directly in his way than the seaport Cesarea. This is the opinion of Witsius, Doddridge, Kenrick, and Olshausen; though many other critics contend that it was Cesarea on the sea-coast.

Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea, and Galilee, 31 and Samaria, and were edified: and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

31. *Then had the churches rest, &c.* The persecution which had commenced with the martyrdom of Stephen, chap. xi. 19, and which had been promoted by the zeal and energy of Saul, had ceased. This has been attributed by some to the conversion of the chief persecutor of Christianity; but that event was three years before, and yet the persecution continued. A much more probable cause was the decree issued by Caius Caligula, the Roman emperor, A. D. 39, to Petronius, governor of Syria, commanding that his statue should be erected in the holy temple at Jerusalem, and that divine worship should be paid to it as a god. Josephus has given the following history of this transaction; and, as it occurred about the time "the churches had rest," it has been very rationally assigned as its cause; the Jews being so much occupied with the horrible desecration which threatened their own temple and worship, that they forebore to persecute the disciples of Jesus. He says "that Caligula ordered Petronius to go with an army to Jerusalem, to set up his statues in the temple there; enjoining him, if the Jews opposed it, to put to death all that made any resistance, and to make all the rest of the nation slaves. Petronius therefore marched from Antioch into Judea with three legions, and a large body of auxiliaries, raised in Syria. All were hereupon filled with consternation, the army being come as far as Ptolemais. The Jews, then gathering together, went to the plain near Ptolemais, and entreated Petronius in the first place for their laws, and in the next place for themselves. Petronius was moved by their entreaties, and leaving his

army and the statues at Ptolemais, went into Galilee; and at Tiberias calls together the chief men of the Jewish people, and exhorts them to submit to the emperor's orders. When they could not engage so to do, he asked them, 'Will ye, then, fight against Cesar?' The Jews answered him that they offered up sacrifices twice every day for Cesar and the Roman people; but that, if he would set up the images, he ought first of all to sacrifice the whole Jewish nation, and that they were ready to submit themselves, their wives, and children, to the slaughter." Philo also gives essentially the same narrative, with, however, some discrepancies. He says that multitudes of the Jews, leaving their homes, came to Petronius, in Phoenicia, with weeping and lamentation, covered with dust, with their hands behind them, as men condemned to die, to beseech him to avert the threatened sacrilege. Their language was, "We come to you, sir, as you see, unarmed. We have brought with us our wives and children, and relations, and throw ourselves down before you, as at the feet of Caius, having left none at home, that you may save all, or destroy all." Occupied with this appalling danger, the rage of persecution naturally subsided.—*Edified*, i. e. were built up—a metaphor taken from architecture, and frequently employed in the New Testament to describe the Christian improvement of the disciples. Rom. xiv. 19; 1 Cor. iii. 9, 10:—*Walking in the fear of the Lord*, i. e. living in the exercise of true piety to God. A devout awe, a profound reverence, is one of the truest elements of a religious character.—*Comfort of the Holy*

32 And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all *quarters*,  
 33 he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda. And  
 there he found a certain man named Eneas, which had kept his  
 34 bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy. And Peter said unto  
 him, Eneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make  
 35 thy bed. And he arose immediately. And all that dwelt in  
 Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.

*Ghost.* They enjoyed an internal conviction that they were the children of God, by the witness of the Spirit in their own hearts. The comfort and enjoyment which they thus received is appropriately introduced as one of the circumstances showing their religious prosperity. Besides the private satisfaction, they may have also felt, as Schleusner intimates, joy in the blessed progress of Christianity in the world.

32. *Throughout all quarters.* Or, among all the regions where churches were planted. The history of Peter is here resumed from chap. viii. 25. — *Saints.* See note on ver. 13. — *Lydda.* This town is situated about 12 miles from Joppa, and 25 from Jerusalem. Its ancient name was *Lod*. 1 Chron. viii. 12; Ezra ii. 33; Neh. xi. 35. Under the Roman dominion, it took the name of *Diospolis*, or the city of Jupiter; but it is called at present *Lud*. It was celebrated as a seat of Jewish learning under the Rabbins. Its fortunes, like those of all the Oriental cities, have been various, and its ruins are still noble, especially those of the church of St. George, reported, though fabulously, according to Robinson, to have been built by a king of England. It is now “a considerable village of small houses.”

33. *Eneas.* From the name, it has been inferred that he was a Hellenist, though it was customary for the same individual to have two names, one in Hebrew or Syriac, and another in Greek. This is the same name as that of the distinguished

Trojan hero, whose calamities and adventures are sung by Virgil in his poem entitled the *Aeneid*. — *Kept his bed eight years.* Not, perhaps, literally confined, but, as Bloomfield comments, “bedridden.” — *Sick of the palsy.* Of which there were several kinds. See note on Mat. iv. 24. It disabled the nerves of motion.

34. *Jesus Christ maketh thee whole.* As much as to say, that the miracle was performed in his name and authority, and for the promotion of his religion. It is equivalent to the expression in chap. iii. 6. The object was to identify the miraculous agency with Christianity, and employ it as an evidence of its divine authority. — *Make thy bed.* The object of that command was to give evidence of the reality of the cure. He was directed to make and spread his bed, in which action he would show that he had the natural possession of his powers of body. By some, the command is understood as signifying that he should spread couches or carpets for the reception of his guests, agreeably to the Oriental method of festive entertainments and hospitality.

35. *Lydda.* See note on ver. 32. — *Saron.* The Hebrew name of which is *Sharon*. 1 Chron. xxvii. 29. It was an extensive and fruitful plain, extending from Mount Carmel to the vicinity of Joppa. Several towns and villages were situated in this plain, and it was proverbial for the fragrance of its flowers. Cant. ii. 1. — *Turned to the Lord*, i. e. became the disciples of Christ. ♠

Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named *Tabitha*, <sup>35</sup> which by interpretation is called Dorcas; this woman was full of good works and alms-deeds which she did. And it came to <sup>37</sup> pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid *her* in an upper chamber. And for- <sup>38</sup>asmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring *him* that he would not delay to come to them. Then Peter arose, <sup>39</sup> and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into

preferable rendering of the verse has been given by Kenrick and others: "And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron that had turned to the Lord saw him"—a fact stated to indicate the general acquaintance with the cure, which is much more probable than that the effect of the miracle was to make converts of all these people.

36. *Joppa*. This was a noted city of Judea, about 40 miles north-west from Jerusalem, situated on the Mediterranean Sea. It might be termed the port of the holy city. It is repeatedly spoken of in the Old Testament. *Josh. xix. 46; 2 Chron. ii. 16; Ezra iii. 7; Jonah i. 3*. Its modern name is *Yafa*. It is still a considerable town, consisting of about 7000 souls, according to Robinson, of whom nearly one half are Christians, including Greeks, Greek Catholics, Arminians, and a few Latins. It has been distinguished in history as the theatre of numerous sieges and battles, especially during those tremendous wars, the crusades. Here, also, Napoleon put to death 2000 of his prisoners in cold blood. — *Tabitha* — *Dorcas*. The former is Hebrew, the latter Greek, signifying *gazelle*, or *antelope*, a graceful animal, to which the Oriental poets frequently liken beautiful women. — *Full of good works and alms-deeds*. In these terms her character for benevolence to the poor and others is described, and the interest of her friends and neighbors in her thus accounted for.

37. *Whom, when they had washed*. It was customary in ancient times to wash the body before burial, or other method of disposing of it. "Among the Greeks," says Burder, "this custom was very particularly observed. There were vessels in some of their ancient temples for this purpose: these were called, in Latin, *labra*. The Greeks used warm water on this occasion; the modern Jews warm water with roses and camomile. It was designed to prevent precipitate interment." — *In an upper-chamber*. Which would be in the more retired part of the house.

38. *Lydda was nigh to Joppa*. It was situated about 12 miles east from Joppa. See ver. 32. — *Would not delay to come to them*. From their anxiety that there should be no delay, and from the short distance between the two places being mentioned, it would seem that their object in obtaining Peter's presence was not, as has been sometimes alleged, consolation in their grief, but a hope of miraculous interposition and restoration to life.

39. *Brought him into the upper chamber*. This also would intimate the wish or expectation of a supernatural resuscitation of their friend. — *All the widows stood by him weeping, &c.* This is a scene of wonderful naturalness and pathos. Our blessings brighten as they depart. Our friends are dearer after they are dead. The benevolence of the good woman had touched and won

the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while 40 she was with them. But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning *him* to the body, said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she 41 sat up. And he gave her *his* hand, and lift her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive. 42 And it was known throughout all Joppa: and many believed in 43 the Lord. And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.

all their hearts. Her friends and neighbors, her objects of charity, the widows, take a melancholy satisfaction in showing what she had done while living; and have no other or more expressive way of manifesting their grief to Peter than the homely one of exhibiting the articles of clothing which she had made, probably for the needy and suffering. The narrative, though brief, thus lets us, in the most life-like way, into the secret of her character, even more than if pages of common description had been employed. She was a kind benefactress, clothing the poor, and, in humble labors for the relief of others, exhibiting the noblest principles of religion. Who shall say that, while a Paul was preaching the gospel to all countries and all ages, and a Peter was planting churches of the true faith, and working deeds of more than mortal power, this good woman was not sending up to Heaven, from a lowlier altar, an equally acceptable incense of devotion, while she was engaged in making "coats and garments" for the forgotten poor of the humble village of Lydda? God accepts us not for the results of our actions,—for they are often frustrated, or may be insignificant,—but for the spirit in which they are performed.—*Coats and garments*, i. e. articles of upper and under clothing.

40. *Put them all forth.* 2 Kings

iv. 33; Mat. ix. 25. As if to shun publicity, and compose his mind in more fervent and rapt devotion.—

*Prayed.* Thus imitating the Master himself in his supplication of the divine blessing, when about to do his wonderful works. John xi. 41, 42.—*Arise.* Mark v. 41, 42.

41. *Lift.* Lifted. She at first merely sat up, but subsequently entirely recovered her strength, so as to arise from the couch on which she had been laid out, preparatory to burial. Luke vii. 15.—*The saints and widows*, i. e. the members of the Christian fraternity.

42. *Many believed in the Lord.* This was the natural and intended effect of the miracle, where allowed to work its true end. It was to gain new adherents to the gospel, and win the confidence of men to its divine authority and its cheerful service. John xii. 11.

43. *Tarried many days.* He continued to labor in a field which yielded so rich a return.—*With*, i. e. in the house of.—*One Simon a tanner.* Nothing except what is related here, and in chap. x. 6, is known of this humble individual. For some reason, perhaps for his piety and kindness, he was honored with the apostle as a guest, though his occupation in life was regarded by the Jews, from its contact with the skins of dead animals, whether clean or unclean, as unwholly and disreputable

## CHAPTER X.

*The History of Cornelius, and his Baptism and Profession of Christianity.*

**T**HREE was a certain man in Cesarea, called Cornelius, a

In the conversion of Saul, and the repose and prosperity of the Christian churches, we discern the finger of God. And as he has, in all periods, from the days of Peter and Saul, watched over and directed the Christian movement, as really as he did the hosts of Israel with his cloud by day, and his pillar of fire by night, who shall be so skeptical as to doubt that he will ever, in all the future, as in all the past, guard and guide the interests of his kingdom on earth? To doubt the progress of Christianity is the worst kind of infidelity. It is to disbelieve God and man, prophecy and history, hope and memory. We may lament single losses, as brave men are wept that fall in a successful battle; we may fear that partial evil will gain a temporary ascendancy here or there; that some church or nation will not prove faithful to itself; but as to the issue of the grand whole, not a shade of darkness or distrust ought for a moment to rest upon our minds. We owe it to our blessed Master never to doubt, that he shall have "the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession." The advancement of the gospel is the movement of Omnipotence; its career, the march of God.

## CHAPTER X.

A new epoch in the development of Christianity commences at this point. We turn over a new leaf of the apostolic history. That great mystery of the kingdom of heaven, or the truth formerly hidden, that the Gentiles were to be admitted, upon equal terms with the Jews, to the covenant of mercy, now opened upon the astonished minds of the

apostles and disciples. They had preached and labored hitherto among the Jews and the Jewish proselytes. They were now taught that God is no respecter of persons, but looks with a benevolent eye upon his children of every name and nation, whether Jews or Gentiles. The rigidity of the prejudices of the apostles could apparently be relaxed only by a divine interposition. Hence the special illumination of Peter, and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the assembled friends of the uncircumcised Cornelius. This was in accordance with the commands of Christ, which were too liberal to be at once comprehended by those bound up in the contracted notions of the Jews, who regarded themselves as the peculiar favorites of Heaven, and despised all other nations as sinners and unclean. It was proper, indeed, that the gospel should be first introduced to them, as they had been prepared by the worship of the only true God for further disclosures of divine truth. Mark xvi. 15; Luke xxiv. 49; Acts i. 8. But they were but the germ of that mighty tree of life, whose leaves were for the healing of the nations. "Salvation was of the Jews," and from them the leaven was to proceed to leaven the world. Though Christ and his apostles encountered the bitterest opposition of their countrymen, in propagating a spiritual and universal religion; yet, if we consider the condition of the pagan nations, we shall perceive that there was no other soil but that of Judea, sufficiently clear of the weeds and tares of idolatry, and its thousand-fold corruptions, to receive and germinate the seed of divine truth.

2 centurion of the band called the *Italian band*, a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much

Besides, the universal dispersion of the Jews into all countries had spread, even wider than the boundaries of strict proselytism, some of those pure and sublime elements of the primitive faith in one God, which were necessary preliminaries to all further advancement in a holy faith or a righteous practice. The Jews were, indeed, and ever have been, unfaithful to their great calling, as the moral enlighteners of mankind. They have clung to the idols of sect and of nation, and have not been willing to merge themselves in the wider good of the whole human family. They have given "to party, what was meant for mankind." They would not submit to take that secondary place, as a single link in the great chain of the divine plan, which had been assigned them in the counsels of Heaven. They were free agents, and they abused their freedom. But their unfaithfulness should not render us insensible to the value of those earlier revelations by Moses and the prophets, without which there could have been neither Messiah nor apostles. The New Testament grew upon the Old, as fruit upon its stem; and without the stem, though seemingly in itself barren and unsightly, there could no fruit ripen to perfection.

1. *Cesarea*. See note on chap. viii. 40. — *Cornelius*. This was a Latin name, common among the Romans. — *A centurion*. A commander of 100 men, a division of the Roman armies. Mat. viii. 5. — *The band called the Italian band*. The last word is evidently superfluous in our translation. This was what was technically called a cohort, of which there were ten in every legion, varying in number, under different circumstances, from 300 to 1000 or more.

Arrian speaks of the Italian band or cohort, and there are many instances in which legions are designated by that epithet. But a legion is not here spoken of at all. The troops here mentioned are called "Italian," in contradistinction to the provincial soldiers, which composed most of the Roman corps in Syria and Palestine. As Cesarea was the residence of the Roman governor, chap. xii. 19, it is probable that these troops constituted his body-guard, and garrisoned the city, and that Cornelius, one of their officers, was a native born Roman citizen.

2. *Devout*, &c. The character of Cornelius, as here described, was of the most pure and exalted kind, combining piety to God and righteousness and benevolence to man. There is no evidence that he was a proselyte in any degree to the Jewish faith; but, from his residence in Judea, and the aspiration of his nature after a more satisfactory religion than idolatry afforded, he had imbibed the great sentiments of all true service to God. Notwithstanding the unfavorable influences of his nation and profession, he became eminent in virtue, and fitted to receive, as he did with gladness, tenderer and purer disclosures of divine mercy. If he had been merely a Jewish proselyte, his case would not have constituted that strong line of demarkation which was now, for the first time, crossed, in the communication of the gospel to the Gentiles; for proselytes had before embraced Christianity. The conversion of the centurion is elsewhere represented as a new feature in the development and diffusion of Christianity. Ver. 15, 22, 34, 35, 45, chap. xi. 1, 18, xv. 7. — *With all his house*. His piety was not only personal, but do-

alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. He saw in a 3 vision evidently, about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. And 4 when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send men to 5 Joppa, and call for *one* Simon, whose surname is Peter: he 6 lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the seaside: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do. And when the angel 7 which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on

mostic and social. He showed his sincerity and zeal by leading his family also in the same path in which he walked himself. — *Gave much alms to the people*, i. e. was very charitable to the Jews. Ver. 22. — *Prayed to God alway*, i. e. he conformed to fixed habits of devotion, similar, it is likely, to those of the Jews, from whom he had caught the leading spirit of his character. There was a beautiful propriety in such a man, the flower of the Gentile world, becoming the first fruits of Christianity. Mat. xiii. 12.

3. *Saw in a vision evidently*, i. e. manifestly, or while awake, as distinguished from a vision in a dream, while asleep. A vision is a supernatural appearance or sight presented to the mind, without the intervention of the senses. — *Ninth hour*. Or, 3 o'clock in the afternoon, the hour of Jewish prayer and the evening sacrifice. — *An angel of God*. In the form of a man, in bright clothing. Ver. 30. Here the circumstances under which the vision took place are described.

4. *What is it, Lord?* Or, sir. John xii. 21. A respectful inquiry of the occasion of the vision. — *Thy prayers and thine alms* — *a memorial before God*. In which the acceptableness to the Divine Being of his piety and benevolence is simply described in

a metaphor, taken from the ascension to heaven of the smoke and the burning incense of the sacrifices. Cornelius was faithful to the light he enjoyed; his heart was engaged in his duty; and although he was still unenlightened in many respects, yet his service was acceptable to Him who searches the heart.

“Unheard by all but angel ears,  
The good Cornelius knelt alone;  
Nor drav'd his prayers and tears  
Would help a world undone.”

5, 6. *Joppa*. See note on chap. ix. 36. — *Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the seaside*. See note on chap. ix. 43. The occupation of a tanner was in general regarded with contempt by the ancients, but by the Jews was considered unclean. The situation of his house, outside of the town, by the seaside, was probably both for the convenience of water necessary to his trade, and in obedience to public regulations, that this business should not be carried on within a city, nor at less than fifty cubits from its walls, on account of the disagreeable and unwholesome effluvia arising from the various processes of the art. — *He shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do*. This clause is excluded from the text by Griesbach and other critics, as destitute of valid authority.

7, 8. *A devout soldier*. The ap-

8 him continually; and when he had declared all these things unto  
9 them, he sent them to Joppa. — On the morrow, as they went  
10 on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up  
11 upon the house-top to pray, about the sixth hour: and he be-  
came very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made  
12 ready, he fell into a trance, and saw heaven opened, and a certain  
vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at  
the four corners, and let down to the earth: wherein were all  
manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and

parent paradox of these terms, when placed side by side, is explained by the fact that, although war is in itself essentially evil and wrong, and all who participate in it must bear a partnership in the guilt, yet individuals educated under different maxims may engage in it with unenlightened consciences, and still remain faithful to most moral and religious obligations. The fruits of the family religion of Cornelius, ver. 2, appeared in those who lived with him, even among his servants. — *Joppa.* Which was situated about 30 miles south of Cesarea.

9. *Peter went up upon the house-top to pray.* As the houses were built with flat roofs, which were guarded by parapets, the place to which Peter resorted was one of convenient retirement. The apostle still observed the Jewish custom of devotion, in which he had been educated. — *About the sixth hour*, i. e. noon. As the messengers probably started from Cesarea the evening before, they would arrive at about that hour from their journey of 30 miles.

10. *He became very hungry, &c.* His condition gave “a juster sense of what was afterwards to befall him.” — *While they made ready.* It was customary to have but two meals, one at about 10 or 11 o’clock in the forenoon, and the other principal one at 6 or 7 in the afternoon. This was not, perhaps, a regular meal. — *He fell into a trance.*

Or, an ecstasy fell upon him. By which is meant that he became rapt in spiritual meditation and divine communion, until he lost all cognizance of things external, when the symbolical representation here described appeared before him. *Trance* and *vision* are often used to express the same state. In the words of Farmer, “A prophetic ecstasy, therefore, denotes not an alienation of mind or loss of reason, nor any transport of fear, wonder, or other passion, but that state the mind is in when it receives extraordinary divine communications by vision.”

11, 12. *Saw heaven opened.* Mat. iii. 16; Acts vii. 56. This figurative language is used as if heaven was a solid sphere, capable of being literally parted. — *A certain vessel.* This was a general term for any article of furniture or implement of use. The particular form which the vessel most resembled was that of a sheet fastened at the four corners, — significant of the entrance of Christians into the church from every quarter, — and lowered to the earth. It is not said that he literally saw such an object descending, but that the representation which was seen by him bore this appearance. — *All manner of four-footed beasts.* By which is to be understood that all kinds of animals belonging to earth, air, and water, clean and unclean, were presented together. No part of the animal kingdom was without its repre-

creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, 14 Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. And the voice *spake* unto him again the second time, 15 What God hath cleansed, *that call not thou common*. This was 16 done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven.

— Now, while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which 17 he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before

sentative. Such was the vision addressed, not to the senses, but to the soul. The distinction between four-footed beasts and wild beasts is that between the artificial classes of domestic and wild animals.

13, 14. *Rise, Peter, kill and eat.* This command derived its seeming appropriateness from the circumstance of his hunger. Ver. 10.— *Never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.* This was said with the feelings of a Jew, who had been educated to discriminate between clean and unclean animals. Lev. xi.; Deut. xiv. He still showed his loyalty to the commands of Moses in this respect.

15. *What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.* We here come to the practical point of application. The vision was designed to convey an important lesson — the abrogation of the Mosaic ritual, and the introduction of the Gentiles into the Christian church. The literal sense, indeed, was that the distinction had ceased between clean and unclean animals; and that they might be eaten indiscriminately without fear of pollution; but the spiritual import was, that the Jewish peculiarity henceforth ceased; that the Gentiles were no more to be regarded as common or unclean, or to be rejected from the Christian brotherhood, as unworthy of participation with Jewish converts in the blessings of the gospel. It was to teach a lofty les-

son of superiority to religious bigotry and national clanship; that God viewed all mankind with equal regard; that all were his children, and brethren one of another. What lesson can be more important and practical than this, in its bearing upon political privileges, social classes, and religious sects! We are to call no men, whatever be their color, condition, avocation, or religious sect, common or unclean, since all are dear in the sight of the infinite Father, and should be dear one to another. What God hath cleansed, *that call not thou, or account not thou, common.*

16. *This was done thrice.* To denote the certainty and importance of the truth symbolically conveyed, and impress it more deeply upon the mind of the apostle. Repetition expresses earnestness, assurance. Gen. xli. 32; Mat. xxvi. 44; 2 Cor. xii. 8.— *The vessel was received up, &c.* No particular moral is to be extracted from every item in a parable, vision, or description in the Bible. To attempt it, is to torture the word of God. Many lines are drawn by way of propriety and embellishment, and to fill out the narrative, as here; though some have endeavored to draw a profound truth from this clause.

17. *Doubted in himself, &c.* So far from imagining this scene, or indulging in a mere idle and pointless reverie, the apostle's attention was

18 the gate, and called, and asked whether Simon, which was sur-  
19 named Peter, were lodged there. While Peter thought on the  
vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee.  
20 Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting  
21 nothing: for I have sent them. — Then Peter went down to  
the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said,  
Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what is the cause wherefore  
22 ye are come? And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just  
man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the  
nation of the Jews, was warned from God by a holy angel to send  
23 for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee. Then called  
he them in, and lodged *them*. — And on the morrow Peter  
went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accom-  
24 panied him. And the morrow after they entered into Cesarea.  
And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kins-

powerfully arrested; but he could not determine what was the intention of the vision. At this critical moment, however, the needed explanation came; just that event occurred which, in his prepared state of mind, was adapted to enlighten Peter's understanding with respect to a new and wonderful development of the Christian plan. — *Simon's house*, i. e. Simon, the tanner. Ver. 6. — *The gate*. Rather, the vestibule or door of the house.

18-22. *Called*, i. e. to the porter at the door. From the custom of thus calling out, or speaking to the person in attendance, the verb *to call upon* has acquired a very common and secondary sense of *going to see, waiting upon, visiting*. — *The Spirit said unto him*. By which is meant that a special intimation is given him by that divine Spirit under which he constantly act'd. — *Three men*. Ver. 7. — *Doubting nothing*. Or, making no scruples, though called to associate with Gentiles, with whom the Jews esteem'd it pollution to eat, and to be united familiarly. — *Which were sent unto him from Cornelius*. Cancelled from the text by

most critics, as spurious. — *Behold, I am he, &c.* Peter promptly yields to the call of duty, though the summons was so contrary to all his Jewish habits and prejudices. — *A just man, &c.* The character of Cornelius, as given by his own servant, reflect'd honor both on him who possessed, and them who could appreciate, such traits of moral beauty and excellence. — *To hear words of thee*. The indefiniteness of this expression well corresponds to the indistinctness of their own conceptions of the nature of Peter's message.

23, 24. *Lodged them*. The messengers had just arrived from a considerable journey, and the day was too far advanced to commence their return. Ver. 9. — *Certain brethren from Joppa*. The precise number, as mentioned in chap. xi. 12, was six. This was a new era in the Christian history, and it was important there should be some brethren present as witnesses of what was then done. As suggested by Priestley, since Peter first preached the gospel to the Jews, chap. ii. 14, and was here authorized first to introduce it to the Gentiles, there was

men and near friends. — And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up: I myself also am a man. And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together. And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath showed

thus fulfilled whatever of preéminence was assigned him by the promise of our Lord, Mat. xvi. 18, though the main sense of the promise was true of all the apostles. Mat. xviii. 18; John xx. 23. — *The morrow after.* Which was the fourth day from the vision of Cornelius. Ver. 3, comp. ver. 8, 9, 23. — *His kinsmen and near friends.* Cornelius was not content with limiting his spiritual privileges and enjoyments to his own personal gratification, but he freely imparts them to his family, fellow-soldiers, and friends. He who has drank in any measure of the pure spirit of religion will desire that others also should quaff at the same fountain of life. The worst kind of selfishness is selfishness in religious privileges.

25–27. *Worshipped him*, i. e. paid him homage or obeisance, as was usual to kings and other persons of distinction in the East. As a worshipper of the true God, Cornelius would not, of course, have paid religious homage to any man, however great or holy. The high respect which Cornelius felt for the one divinely sent as his teacher, prompted this act to Peter, though but a stranger. Thus the worship which was paid our Saviour was that of civil obeisance, not of religious homage. Mat. viii. 2; Mark v. 6; Luke xxiv. 52; John ix. 38. — *Stand up; I myself also am a man.* Cornelius had prostrated himself before Peter. It was not because the act was religious adoration, but because it was a ta-

ken of too profound respect for him to receive, as implying too great a disparity between them, as servants of the same God. The sensitiveness with which the apostles shrank from the honors offered them, whether civil or religious, chap. xiv. 14, 15, testifies how far they were from making the honors of this world the aim of their labors. Well would it have been, if the pretended successors of Peter had likewise shunned, with equal impatience, those acts of adulation and tokens of servile homage which have been so abundantly paid them by blind adherents; and had said, like Peter to the pious Cornelius, “Stand up; we ourselves also are men.” — *As he talked with him, he went in.* It would appear that Cornelius, under the impulse of his joy and respect, had gone out to greet the apostle as he approached, and that, having met him, they returned together into the house.

28. *Unlawful.* Moses had, indeed, forbidden alliances by marriage or otherwise between the Israelites and foreign idolatrous nations, in order to preserve the purity of the true religion. Lev. xviii. 24–30; Deut. vii. 3–12. But there was no provision in his law to forbid the interchange of proper civilities and offices of kindness and hospitality. Those more rigid prohibitions were the offspring of scribes and Pharisees, and indicated rather the period of corruption than of purity in the national faith. They were glosses put upon the text of the law, and betokened a

29 me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore came I *unto you* without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent 30 for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me? And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man 31 stood before me in bright clothing, and said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the 32 sight of God. Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of *one* Simon a tanner, by the seaside: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto 33 thee. Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.

narrow spirit of clanship, inconsistent in a nation chosen by God to be the depositary of a pure religion for the eventual good of all mankind.—

*To keep company, &c.* Lightfoot remarks, that by these words it is not to be understood as if Jews might have no dealings at all with Gentiles; for they might walk, and talk, and traffic with them, as they could hardly help doing, living in heathen cities, and coming into contact with the Gentiles continually in trade at Jerusalem. Neh. xiii. 16. But the unlawfulness of their intercourse with the Gentiles consisted in a nearer and more intimate society, and especially in these two things, “eating with them, and going into their houses.” Chap. xi. 3. It was on account of these habits, that Tacitus speaks of the “hostile spirit” of the Jews towards all other nations, and Paul, 1 Thess. ii. 15, that they are “contrary to all men.”—*Another nation*, i. e. any besides the Jews.—*God hath showed me, &c.* It was the express revelation of God. The vision which had been granted, ver. 13—15, had taught him that the Mosaic distinction between clean and unclean animals was abolished; and thence the great inference was drawn

that national distinctions were also prostrated, and that the Messiah’s kingdom was equally accessible to Jews and to Gentiles.

29, 30. *Without gainsaying.* This is the primary meaning of the original, but the secondary sense is preferable—without delay, promptly.—

*I ask therefore for what intent.* Or, cause or reason. The apostle had already been partially informed, ver. 22, but would receive a more explicit declaration from Cornelius himself, in the presence of his friends.—

*Four days ago.* The vision occurred on the first day; the messengers arrived on the second, at Joppa, ver. 9, 17; on the third, in company with Peter and his brethren, ver. 23, commenced their return to Cesarea; and on the fourth arrived at the house of the centurion.—*I was fasting until this hour*, i. e. the same hour of the day as when he was conversing with Peter. Though not a proselyte, Cornelius apparently conformed to many customs of the Jews.—*The ninth hour*, i. e. three o’clock in the afternoon. Ver. 3.—*In bright clothing.* Rather, in white clothing. Rev. xv. 6; Mat. xxviii. 3.

31—33. See notes on ver. 4—6.

— Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation,

34. *Of a truth I perceive.* Expressing the earnestness of the conviction which now sprang up in his mind.— *God is no respecter of persons.* Mat. xxii. 16. This is an assertion of the divine impartiality and equity. The Creator favors none on account of birth, nation, wealth, rank, or power, nor does he neglect any because they are destitute of these external distinctions. The bearing of this declaration is apparent. The grand truth had now flashed upon the mind of Peter, that Jews and Gentiles were equally the objects of the benevolent regard of God. His mind burst the ceremonies of old prejudices, and dilated into the liberty of Christ, the world's Messiah. The case of Cornelius had taught him that the grounds of acceptance with God were not national or external, but moral, grounds. The Roman centurion had been taken, and the Jewish Rabbin left. The mysteries of God had been hidden from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes. The weak things of the world had been chosen, to confound the things which are mighty. The first had been last, and the last first. In this seeming confusion, the impulsive soul of Peter, guided by the spirit of heaven, alighted upon the true principle, which he fearlessly utters. But it would be an illegitimate inference from his words, that God is no respecter of persons, as it regards their characters and lives; that he treats the good and the bad alike; that his providence is promiscuous, his government undistinguishing, his favor and his frown equally capricious; for the words of Peter relate, not to the internal, but the external, condition. The instance of Cornelius himself testified that He had respect to integrity and sanctity, ver.

4, 22, 31; and in the next verse the apostle proceeds to limit and explain his first announcement, by declaring, in the clearest manner, what was the grand principle of acceptance or rejection with the impartial Deity.

35. *In every nation.* Whether Jew or Gentile, bond or free.— *He that searcheth him, and worketh righteousness.* Or, does right. As Peter had virtually declared, in the preceding verse, “God was no respecter of persons,” that he would as readily receive to his favor a Cornelius as a Gamaliel, a soldier of Rome as a Rabbin of Jerusalem, the question would naturally arise, *Upon what ground was acceptance based?* how should his justice and truth be vindicated? The essential criterion was here laid down. God would accept those, and only those, in any nation, who revered him and worked righteousness. The two leading branches of human duty, as here indicated, are what is due to heaven and what to earth, what to God and what to man,— reverence and righteousness, piety and benevolence. It is announced, with noonday distinctness, that, upon these premises, God is a respecter of persons; that he will accept the heaven-fearing and well-doing man, and that he will reject the impious and unrighteous. Thus is the moral character of God, as a righteous Governor of the universe, vindicated against every aspersion, and a system described under which every intelligent and moral being must rejoice to live. This declaration sheds a world of light over all the dealings of God with mankind throughout successive ages. He has poured out his Spirit upon certain individuals, at various periods, not because they were his special favorites, but because they were selected

he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with

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as his agents for the good of the rest of mankind. The Jews were his chosen people, not simply for their own sakes, — for they were ever a stiff-necked and rebellious people, — but for the sake of a corrupt and idolatrous world. The Christian nations, also, have been blessed with the gospel, not that they might pride themselves on their superior privileges, and despise others ; but that they might be light-bearers to a world lying in darkness and the shadow of death. In the mean time, individuals all over the world, through all time and into all eternity, are treated according to their moral deserts, — good to the good, and evil to the evil. The black and the white, the Jew and the Gentile, the Christian and the heathen, are judged according to the deeds done in the flesh, whether good or bad. In making up the account, as a hundred passages of Scripture declare, allowance is made for the talents, condition, and privileges, of each soul, and the balance is struck to the side of mercy.

This interpretation sheds a gleam of light over the condition of the heathen, and justifies the ways of God to man. If they have no clearer law, they are a law unto themselves, and by that they will be judged. So far as they are faithful to the light of conscience, and heed its divine sanctions, they must and will taste its sweet and immortal approval. And this view does not diminish one iota the need of the gospel to mankind, or make the cross of Christ of none effect. But, on the contrary, it enlarges, dignifies, heightens, immeasurably, its necessity, value, and glory. Christianity is an instrument of regeneration, of improvement, of salvation. The few cases of partial fidelity to duty and to God among the heathen — a Cornelius in one age, a Socrates in another — are perfected

and multiplied by its power to myriads and millions. It comes to propagate spiritual light and life through degraded masses of humanity, and to enable multitudes to recognize a higher moral law, and yield it more consistent obedience than they paid to the beggarly elements of superstition and custom. The sublime principles of the moral government of God remain the same under all dispensations, yesterday, to-day, and forever. And the single benevolent and essential end for which Moses and the prophets opened, and Jesus and the apostles closed and sealed, the covenant of mercy, was to enlighten mankind as to these principles, reconcile their hearts to them, and through them to the Father ; and move them by all hopes and fears, once by the thunders of Sinai, and ever by the blood of Calvary, to flee from all sin, and to seek the refuge of God, and his loving-kindness, which is better than life.

As remarked, however, by Rosenmuller, Peter does not assert an *indifference* of religions, but of nations. That religion, of course, must be infinitely preferable, in comparison with others, which leads men with the highest and strongest influences to "fear God, and work righteousness ;" and though Cornelius had done well as a Gentile, with an infusion of Judaism, he would do far better as a Christian ; for, though he had become a man of prayer and consistent goodness, he yet needed the blessed motives and nurture of the gospel to complete the work which had been so well begun. The text is not, therefore, to be construed as diminishing the necessity of the cross of Christ, and the message of glad tidings, since but few would ever advance, without the gospel, even as far as the centurion. The great por-

him. The word which *God* sent unto the children of Israel, 36 preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) that word, 37 *I say, ye know*, which was published throughout all Judea, and

tion of mankind would remain forever in brutal sin; while Cornelius, too, and such as he, required further illumination, impulse, and sanctification, before they could be meet for the heavenly kingdom, or attain to the highest excellence of which they were made capable. So that it may be well said that "there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved," except that of our Lord Jesus Christ.

36. *The word*, i. e. the revelation, the gospel; one of the leading principles of which was that just declared, that Jews and Gentiles alike come under the merciful regards of the impartial Father of all.—*Sent unto the children of Israel*. The message of good news and of great joy had been first proclaimed to the Jews, both by the Messiah and his followers. The worshippers of the one true God were entitled to the first opportunity. Their elementary discipline had prepared the way for the reception of higher truths, and "the touching of the soul to finer issues." Mat. x. 5, 6; Luke xxiv. 47; Acts xiii. 46.—*Preaching peace, &c.* Here, also, appears the great idea indicated above. Peace between the Jews and Gentiles was now proclaimed. The walls of division and of bitter alienation were thrown down, and all were brought into one body by Jesus. They were mutually reconciled to one another, and jointly reconciled to God. The gospel is eminently a religion of peace. It breathes peace and love as its very element; it dies in the atmosphere of violence and war. It enjoins and diffuses peace in the soul, in families, in society, in nations, through the world. It came to uproot not only the Jewish exclusiveness, but to unite

the tribes and races of men in a loving brotherhood; to melt away the icy repugnances of clanship, and party, and nationality, and to teach men how to love their country not less, but their race more; so that the Christian should adopt the golden motto, "My country is the world, and my countrymen all mankind."—*He is Lord of all*. This clause is parenthetical—thrown in, as numerous Trinitarian writers concede, not to declare the Deity of Jesus Christ, but to express still further the reigning thought of the whole passage—that the Messiah was not the Messiah of the Jews merely, but also of the Gentiles; was appointed the spiritual Lord of the world by the power delegated from the Father. Thus Pyle has said, "This was the true Messiah, the Saviour of all mankind, Gentiles as well as Jews, constituted by God the Father to be the Governor and Judge of all the world."

37. *That word*. Rather, that thing, matter, affair; for the original is different from the term in ver. 36, rendered in the same way; the one meaning the doctrine, as coming from God, the other as taking a concrete form, as a religious movement, and manifested in the life, preaching, and death of Jesus Christ. Ver. 38.—*Ye know*. This verb governs, as its object, *word* in this verse, *word* in ver. 36, and *Jesus* in ver. 38, which all appear to be put in apposition with one another. The apostle here appeals to the general knowledge of his hearers respecting the gospel; for, besides the common report, which would reach this populous city, of the miracles and doctrines of Christ, Philip, the evangelist, had, in all probability, preached the new religion in this place of his

38 began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were

own abode. Chap. viii. 40.—*Published throughout all Judea.* By the successive ministries of the twelve, and the seventy, Luke ix. 10, as well as by his own travels, Jesus had diffused a general knowledge of his revelation throughout Palestine.—*Began from Galilee.* This clause would, in a strict succession of thought, more properly come before the last, thus, “The word began from Galilee, and was published throughout all Judea.” Though Jesus was a native of Bethlehem in Judea, yet Nazareth and Capernaum were the respective residences of his childhood and manhood, and his first miracle was at Cana. His apostles and disciples at first were principally Galileans; so that it might be truly said that to obscure and despised Galilee the world owes Christianity, so far as its earthly origin is considered.—*After the baptism which John preached.* Peter fails not to mention this important preliminary step to the introduction of the gospel, the preaching of reformation by John, and his baptism of repentance. Mat. iii.

38. *How God anointed, &c.* The more strictly grammatical rendering of this clause in connexion with the two preceding verses, according to Scholefield, would be as follows: “The word which he sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, (he is the Lord of all,) ye know; even the matter which took place throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached, concerning Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed him,” &c. In figurative language, taken from the Jewish custom of anointing their kings, priests, and prophets, Jesus is repro-

sented as being anointed, i. e. set apart, invested with his holy office, endued with power from on high.—*With the Holy Ghost and with power.* Or, to drop the circumlocution, with the powerful influence of the Holy Spirit, by which he was enabled to work miracles, to

“Attest his heaven-derived claim,  
And glorify his Father’s name.”

—*Who went about doing good.* No words could express in a more simple and beautiful manner the unwearied benevolence of our Master. The traveller has visited various countries in the pursuit of knowledge, and the extension of his fame. The conqueror has traversed continents, but left a trail of blood behind him. The adventurous merchant penetrates the most distant regions of the earth in quest of gold. The religious bigot compasses sea and land to make one proselyte to his own dark creed. But none, except a divine invention, could devise a original a character as this, of him who went about doing good; who used his great powers only to accomplish benevolent ends, by curing the sick, comforting the afflicted, and recovering the sinner. He was thus the image of the Father’s love, as well as the bearer of the Father’s power. He did good, therefore, by being first himself good, by the pure effulgence of his own benignant spirit, and by acting under a lively sense of his responsibility to God for his power. He was ever ready to forget and sacrifice himself for the good of others, and the salvation of men. He sought, also, chiefly to do good to men spiritually, and to redeem their immortal souls from corruption. In all which we ought to

oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are 39 witnesses of all things which he did, both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly; 40 not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, 41 even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from

imitate our great exemplar, and, like him, in our several spheres, "go about doing good."—*Healing all that were oppressed of the devil.* Farmer remarks, that "though one author refers this passage to Christ's recovering men from the power of the devil, to obedience to God, it is nevertheless evident that St. Peter is here showing that Christ's divine commission was demonstrated by his *miracles.*" The point is, that the Jews were accustomed to regard *all* the diseased as oppressed by an evil spirit, Luke xiii. 11, 16; but those possessed by demons, or demoniacs, i. e. insane, lunatic, and epileptic persons, were supposed, in particular, to be tormented by the spirits of wicked men deceased. To quote the writer above, "The apostle seems here to refer to Christ's cure of the diseased in general, without taking into consideration the particular case of the demoniacs; who in the Gospels are distinguished from the blind, the lame, the paralytic, and those afflicted with other maladies; concerning whom we never read that demons *entered*, or were *expelled*, from them." Mat. iv. 23.—*For God was with him*, i. e. in a miraculous manner, assisting him to perform his wonderful and beneficent works. John iii. 2, 34, xvi. 32. No truth is reiterated more frequently in the New Testament than the dependence of Christ upon the Father; that he was sanctified and sent, raised up, commissioned, empowered, by one greater than himself; and it is a wholly unauthorized evasion and subterfuge, from the pressure of

this oft-repeated fact, to resort to the theory of the double nature, the twofold being, of Christ.

39, 40. *We are witnesses of all things.* To bear testimony to the truth of Christ's history was a leading branch of the apostolic office. Luke xxiv. 48; John xiv. 26; Acts i. 22, v. 32.—*Whom they slew and hanged on a tree.* Or, better, "whom they slew by suspending on a tree," i. e. cross. Chap. v. 30.—*Him God raised up.* In every instance, God is referred to as the cause of Christ's resurrection. Chap. v. 31.—*Showed him openly.* His appearance was so manifest as to preclude the possibility of mistake.

41. *Not to all the people, but unto witnesses.* Here is a singular concession that Christ did not appear, except to his friends. At first this might seem to impugn the validity of the evidence of his resurrection, but further consideration will lead to a different conclusion; for it was necessary that those should see him, after his resurrection, who had been familiar with him during his life; else they might not identify him. A miscellaneous multitude could not, of course, have made any record, or had an opportunity of giving any trustworthy testimony of this important fact. Besides, as to any moral end being subserved by his reappearance, those who had not been convinced by his other miracles and teachings, would not have been persuaded, though he rose from the dead and appeared to them. The number of witnesses was sufficient for the purpose, and at one time was

**42** the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God *to be* the **43** Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive **44** remission of sins. — While Peter yet spake these words, the

considerable. 1 Cor. xv. 6. It was proper, also, that those should bear witness to this wonderful fact who would make use of it for the great end for which it was wrought, and would die, if need be, for the truth of what they testified. The fairness of the apostle in stating that Jesus appeared only to his disciples, carries with it great weight, and overbalances any supposed weakness in the evidence. — *Chosen before of God.* The apostles had been divinely selected for the work. — *Who did eat and drink, &c.* Luke xxiv. 42, 43; John xxi. 12, 13. These circumstances are mentioned by Peter as striking corroborations of the resurrection of Jesus, to assure them, beyond all doubt, of the reality of the miracle.

**42. He commanded us.** See Mat. xxviii. 19, 20; Luke xxiv. 47; Acts i. 8. — *The Judge of quick and dead.* See chap. xvii. 31; 2 Tim. iv. 8; Heb. xii. 23. One of the prominent objects of Christianity was to reveal a future state of righteous retribution, in which men will be judged according to the deeds done in the flesh, whether good or bad. The apostle here announces that Jesus was to be the Judge of the quick and the dead, or the living and the dead, i. e. of all men. From the facts that, in some instances, *God* is represented as the Judge, Eccl. iii. 17; Rom. ii. 16, iii. 6; in others *Christ*, John v. 22, 27; 2 Tim. iv. 1; in others *the Word*, John xii. 48; in yet others, *the twelve apostles*, Mat. xix. 28; and also *the saints*, 1 Cor. vi. 2, 3; — the most rational inference is, that men will be judged according to the eternal principles of righteous-

ness. But the particular administration is left in darkness, since the declarations of Scripture, if literally interpreted, would often conflict with each other. Jesus will be the Judge of mankind, both here and hereafter, so far as their condition is determined by the laws of his religion. The expression used in the text somewhat corresponds, therefore, to that in ver. 36, “He is Lord of all.”

**43. To him give all the prophets, &c.** The word *all* is not to be pressed too far, but that Jesus ~~was~~ is the object of prophecy is put beyond question by his own declaration, as well as by that of his apostles. Luke xxiv. 27, 44–46; Acts iii. 18, xiii. 27. It is customary for the commentators to refer to such passages as Is. xxviii. 16, liii.; Zech. xiii. 1; but the application is not always apparent. — *Whosoever believeth in him, &c.* The promise of remission of sins is here given to him that believeth in Christ; because a true faith in him, by its very nature, leads to repentance, amendment of life, and good works. Those who believed in Christ, even from among the Gentiles, were also cleansed from that state of ceremonial uncleanness in which they were involved, and admitted to the condition of saints, or holy men, so far as their external condition was concerned. A new and living way was opened to the favor of God, without entering by the circuitous passage of the Mosaic ritual. Belief, faith, a moral sentiment and principle, not an external ritual, were to be hereafter the criterion of character, and the ground of acceptance.

**44. The Holy Ghost fell.** The

Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they 45 of the circumcision which believed, were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with 46 tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man 47 forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded 48 them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

Jewish doctors taught that "the Holy Spirit would neither dwell upon any heathen, nor upon any Jew in a heathen country." Hence the descent of the Holy Spirit upon this company of Gentiles, and the extraordinary gift of tongues bestowed upon them, ver. 46, would be regarded as testimony from heaven, that Gentiles as well as Jews might enter the new church of the Messiah, notwithstanding their supposed ceremonial unfitness. No miracle would convince the Jews more readily than this, that no national bar guarded the entrance to Christ's kingdom; but that in him all nations should find the liberty of a spiritual service, and privileges only restricted, or obstructed in their use or enjoyment, by the moral state of those who sought them.

45, 46. *They of the circumcision*, i. e. the companions of Peter from Joppa. In the astonishment which they exhibited, we detect the previous state of their minds, and the narrow prejudices of Jewish exclusiveness. Probably the best illustration of the strength of those prejudices would be found, at the present day, in the rooted antipathy of the whites to the blacks. The Jews deemed other nations but as dogs and sinners; and to admit them to an equality with themselves in religious privileges was a monstrous desecration, a horrid sacrilege, in their judgment. — *Speak with tongues.*

See notes on chap. ii. 4–8. The fact that they were empowered to speak in different tongues was well calculated to prove, in the most convincing manner, the reality of the spiritual influence. — *Answered.* More correctly, "said;" or, "spoke."

47. *Can any man forbid water?* By which it would seem that the water was to be brought to them, and not they to the water; and hence might be inferred the smallness of the quantity to be used, and the probability of the mode employed as being that of sprinkling, or affusion. The question implies the possibility of a doubt in the minds of some of the spectators, as to the propriety of their receiving Christian baptism. It is evident that something more than the *baptism of the Spirit* was required for the Christian profession; since these Gentiles had already received spiritual gifts, and yet were baptized with water, as an important additional ceremony. The communication of the Spirit and the gift of tongues convinced the Jews present of the propriety of baptizing even Gentiles, which may serve to explain the reversed order of proceedings, compared with that in chap. ii. 38, viii. 15–17, where the Spirit was imparted after baptism.

48. *Commanded them to be baptized, &c.* Though execution of the command is not mentioned, yet the rite undoubtedly took place. It is not stated who performed the office;

## CHAPTER XI.

*The Vision of Peter, and the Diffusion of the Gospel.*

AND the apostles and brethren that were in Judea, heard that

but, as the apostles did not always baptize, it might, in this instance, devolve on the other brethren present. 1 Cor. i. 14-17. The word *commanded* implies that the work was done by others. It is remarkable that, in all the recorded instances of baptism in the New Testament, the formula used is not the precise one given by Jesus, in Mat. xxviii. 19; but the words are, in the name of the Lord, in the name of Jesus Christ. This should teach us not to have a blind and superstitious regard for the particular form of words, but to reverence its vital spirit, which is capable of being conveyed in other terms without violation.

The interest of the foregoing chapter consists in that new act in the progress of the Christian drama by which the Gentiles are admitted upon the stage, and even allowed entrance into the holy of holies, the influences of the Spirit and the privileges of profession. A worthy leader conducts the Gentile host into the promised land of the gospel — Cornelius, the holy, devout, and just man. The long line of march has still been sustained from generation to generation, and it will, in due time, draw into the “noble army” all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. God be thanked that, in view of this glorious ancient example, we may ever appeal with confidence from the miserable illiberality and exclusiveness of dogmatists, to the benevolent impartiality and even-handed administration of the Father of all! that creeds cannot shut up the universal truth, nor churches limit the boundless mercies of Heaven! We shudder at Jewish bigotry, which proposed to monopolize God for its own be-

hoof, and sink the rest of the rational creation into perdition. Let us not be cheated by names, but see in Christian bigotry, so rampant in many of the lordly hierarchies and the lowly heresies of the present day, a yet more deplorable deviation from the spirit of true religion — an erring from the right path, not in black midnight or deceptive twilight, but under the cloudless sun.

## CHAPTER XI.

In the development of Christianity, there are certain defined stages and gradations. The preaching of John the Baptist; the life of Christ, his death, and reappearance and ascension; the spiritualization of the apostles; the conflict with the Jewish sects, with Pharisaic bigotry, and Sadducean skepticism; the diversified struggle of the gospel, after it passed the bounds of Judea, with the hundred-headed Gentile idolatry, that lay outstretched like some monstrous reptile, ready to lift up its glittering crest in every city, and hiss at the holy preachers of God with its forked and poisonous tongue; — these constitute a succession of growths, of unfoldings, of the truth of Heaven, in its application to human sin and want, most interesting in their character, and beautiful to study. Who, that has an eye to behold, and a heart to admire, the delicate processes of nature — the spreading of the living light; the series of germ, leaf, bud, flower, fruit, and seed, in the plant — will not also acknowledge the forming hand of the Deity in this spiritual creation; this new heaven of brighter suns, this new earth, with richer, lovelier productions?

the Gentiles had also received the word of God. And when 2

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We stand, at the commencement of this chapter, at a new stage of expansion, at a new point of departure of the Christian faith, at the outset of the most important controversy that has ever arisen in the church; one that concerned the largest parties, the whole Jewish world being on one side, and the whole Gentile world on the other; one that tested the most thoroughly the nature and aim of the gospel, confuting the Jewish fallacy, and demonstrating the divine impartiality to all mankind; one whose errors have more than any other infected succeeding ages, diffused mists and false lights through whole nations, and mingled a vicious element in the composition of most systems of faith in Christendom. We have come to the edge of that battlefield, where the fortunes of churches, and kingdoms, and souls, have been decided in "high debate." Before we become confused in the tumult of the conflict, let us see the position of the combatants, and understand the nature and justice of their respective causes.

The Jews contended that the Messiah was peculiarly *their* Messiah. They monopolized his religion. The Gentiles would be blessed by him, not as Gentiles, but by first becoming Jews, and thus gaining a title to his favor and promises. The way to Jesus was still through the holy temple. Every Gentile neck must first bow to the yoke of Moses, before it could lift itself up in the liberty of Christ. This was the feeling of the apostles, Jews as they were, and long and stiffly did they cling to their national peculiarity. They were but babes, little ones, as the Master called them, for a long time. They could not walk in their Lord's footsteps. They could hardly lisp the glorious language of love,

human brotherhood, and boundless, impartial mercy, which he used as heartily and gracefully as if he had not lived in Nazareth, nor worshipped at Jerusalem. But he bore with them tenderly, and nurtured them, as a nurse her feeble child, until they should grow up into the stature of perfect men in him.

The Gentiles, on the other hand, when they became converts, felt painfully the stricture of this Jewish bondage. The apostles themselves, Peter by a vision, Paul by revelation, and all by a council, were gradually or wholly emancipated from the old error. They demanded for their new disciples exemption from the burdensome ritual, which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear. Acts xv. 10. They said that nothing which God had cleansed, none of his creatures, children, should be pronounced "common or unclean." They asserted that all national distinctions were sunk; Jew and Gentile, bond and free, were one, occupied the same platform; that not the works of the law, the Jewish ritual, but faith, a moral and spiritual principle, justified a man; that circumcision and uncircumcision availed nothing, but a new moral creation in Christ; that the Jew would not be saved because he was a Jew, nor the Gentile lost because he was a Gentile; but both be judged by the faith, the disposition of the heart, and the practice of the life, sincere and corresponding thereto.

Such, in brief, were the parties, such the contest. And he will read the New Testament in vain, to a certain extent, who does not keep these great outlines clearly marked before his mind's eye, and appreciate the merits of this controversy. It is the only key to the difficult Epistles of Paul.

Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them. — But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them, saying, I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision; A certain vessel descended, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me: upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay, and eat. But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth. But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. And this

1. *The apostles and brethren.* Not only the private disciples, but the apostles themselves, would shrink from the bold step of Peter—the admission of Gentiles without their coming under the Jewish yoke. They had already heard, by many-tongued rumor, of the transactions at Cesarea. — *In Judea.* The city of Cesarea was in the land of Judea; but since it was essentially peopled by Gentiles, it might stand, as suggested by Calmet, somewhat in contrast with the Holy Land.

2. *They that were of the circumcision contended with him;* i. e. the Jewish Christians expostulated with Peter for his late management of the case of Cornelius and his Gentile friends. The news had flown swifter than the apostle, and his conduct was already prejudged, and a verdict made up against him. The brethren were prepared, as soon as he arrived, to administer their rebuke for measures which they regarded not only as unauthorized, but subversive of the gospel. The apostle was ready, however, to meet this burst of indignation, and he judiciously offered, as his best defence, a simple narrative, ver. 4—17, of the whole matter;

which would not excite their passions, like a course of argument or appeal, and would furnish them with data for making up their judgment without bias. The fact that they thus contended with Peter, and at first questioned the wisdom of his proceedings, shows how far they were from yielding him that supremacy and infallibility in all respects, which has been arrogated by the church of Rome, not only for him, but for the long and irregular line of his pretended successors in the papal chair. Gal. ii. 11—14.

3. *Wentest in — didst eat with them.* The accusation contained two branches; one, that he went as a friend into the house of Cornelius, and the other, that he ate with the Gentiles — both flagrant offences for a Jew. Compare note on chap. x. 28.

4. *Rehearsed — expounded it by order.* Or, began and laid it before them in order. He gives a history of the whole affair from beginning to end, with all the minuteness incident to that simple and inartificial state of society in which Peter and his companions had been brought up.

5—14. See an exposition of this passage in the notes on chap. x. 9—43.

was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven. And behold, immediately there were three men already come 11 unto the house where I was, sent from Cesarea unto me. And 12 the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover, these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house: and he showed us how he had seen an angel in his 13 house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; who shall tell thee 14 words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved. And as 15 I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how 16 that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. Forasmuch then as God gave 17 them the like gift as *he did* unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I, that I could withstand God? — When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified 18 God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

15, 16. *And as I began to speak.* Or, as rendered by Winer, "scarcely had I spoken a few words," implying that he had advanced somewhat in his discourse, when the descent of the Spirit took place. — *Then remembered I, &c.* See chap. i. 5, and note thereon.

17. *As God gave them the like gift.* This was the critical point. The gift of the Holy Spirit showed that they were accepted, as well as the Jews, to the privileges of Christianity. — *What was I, that I could withstand God?* This passage has great spirit, as rendered by Winer. — "But I, who was I? was I powerful enough to hinder God?" If Peter admitted Cornelius and his kinsmen to the privileges of the church without circumcision, he would resist the current belief of his associates; but if he refused, he would assume the more tremendous responsibility of withstanding God. In this strait between two, he could not hesitate which course to pursue.

18. *They held their peace.* They ceased to chide Peter for a neglect of duty, when they saw how plainly he was guided by the finger of God. — *Glorified God.* They did not merely acquiesce in silence, but exhibited a positive gratification, and expressed their thanks to God for his wonderful interposition in behalf of the Gentiles. A glimpse of higher truth beamed upon their minds; the thrill of a nobler sentiment, of a universal love, stirred their hearts. In this better moment of fresh conviction, before cold calculation and worldly prudence had time to quench their earnest zeal, they praised God that Gentiles, too, had come to taste the divine mercy. Gal. ii. 11 — 14. — *Also.* This word would possess greater force if placed after "Gentiles." — *Granted repentance unto life.* By these words their change is described from Gentile superstition and sin to a pure religion. It is "an example of that frequent Scripture use of language by which God is said

- 19 *Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.*  
20 *And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which when*

to give what he enables one to attain, by the natural or moral means imparted to them." The Most High had communicated to them that revelation of truth, that blessed gospel of light and love, which enjoined and promoted repentance unto life, not to be repented of. Men will not be sorry for what they have been, or what they have done, until they have seen something better and holier, with which comparing themselves, they will deplore their deficiencies, and hasten to redeem their wasted time and talents. The gospel presents in Christ that lofty and shining model of excellence, which of itself deeply rebukes the lowness of their virtues, and calls on them to repent and live. "Repentance unto life" is a combination of words, descriptive of those three great stages or processes in the development of the soul's life, — amendment, — progress, — and blessedness.

19. *The persecution that arose about Stephen.* Chap. viii. 4. The very means employed to annihilate the nascent church only served, in the good providence of God, to diffuse more widely its preachers and its truth, and put it forever beyond the power of man to extinguish it. The history here leaves, for the most part, the land of Judea, and the preaching of the gospel to the Jews, and records henceforth its triumphs in other countries, and over the Gentiles; especially under the influence of Paul, the chieftest of the apostles. — *Phenice.* Phœnicia, a narrow strip of country, extending along the shores of the Mediterranean, between Syria and Palestina. It was distinguished for its commerce, and contained the celebrated

cities of Tyre and Sidon, besides several others of some note. *Mark.* iii. 8; *Aets.* xxi. 3, 4, xxvii. 3. No doubt many Jews were resident in these great commercial emporiums. — *Cyprus.* See note on chap. iv. 36. — *Antioch.* The capital of Syria, situated on the River Orontes, near its mouth. It was founded by Antigonus, one of the generals of Alexander the Great, and from him called *Antigonia*; but afterwards received the name of *Antioch*, from *Antiochus*, another king of Syria, who completed it. During the predominance of the Christian religion, it was called *Theopolis*, the divine city. It was rich, populous, and refined, and was at one period accounted the next city after Rome, and Alexandria, in the Roman empire. Cicero describes it as a noble and celebrated place, abounding with learned men and liberal studies. It was a great resort of the Jews, and afterwards of Christians, on account of the toleration here granted to different religionists. In all ages, it has been exposed to those terrific enemies of Oriental cities, wars and earthquakes. In A. D. 588, no less than 60,000 persons perished in an earthquake; and in 1822 it was reduced to a heap of ruins by the same tremendous agent. Its present name is *Antakia*, and it numbers about 10,000 inhabitants. — *To none but unto the Jews only.* The proceedings of Peter, with relation to Cornelius, had not, of course, taken place when the disciples fled to Antioch; and they therefore still restricted, as usual, their labors "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

20. *Men of Cyprus.* See note on chap. iv. 36. — *Cyrene.* Note on

they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: <sup>21</sup> and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord. Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church <sup>22</sup> which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he

chap. ii. 10. One of the Cyrenians is called *Lucius* in chap. xiii. 1. — *Spake unto the Grecians.* Or, as edited by Griesbach and others, "Greeks." The difference is, that the Grecians, or Hellenists, might be either foreign Jews, or Gentile proselytes to Judaism; whereas it is supposed that the Greeks or Gentiles are here meant, and the fact is stated as remarkable, and gratitude felt, ver. 23, that the Gentiles also had received the grace or favor of God. It is true, that most ancient authorities read *Grecians* or *Hellenists*, not *Greeks* or *Gentiles*; but some contain the latter reading, and internal evidence is thought to be in favor of it. After the statement in ver. 19, that the gospel was preached to the Jews in Antioch, and of course, in all probability, to the Hellenists, or foreign or converted Jews, chap. vi. 1, 5, the writer proceeds to say, that some from Cyprus and Cyrene, probably after the admission of Cornelius and his friends, went to Antioch, and preached to the Gentiles, which was something new. The example of Peter was immediately taken up and acted upon; and by none would this be more likely to be done than by the Cyprians and Cyrenians, who from having been themselves originally Gentiles, or living among the Gentiles, would feel a greater sympathy with the degraded heathen, and a more resolute spirit in recovering them from their lost condition.

21. *The hand of the Lord.* Luke i. 66. By which is meant, that the power, the aid of God accompanied them. They were empowered to work miracles, speak with tongues,

invoke the descent of the Spirit, and show incontrovertible evidence that they were the teachers of a heaven-sent religion. The consequences were apparent. — *A great number believed, &c.* Those who were convinced of the truth, passed through the two necessary steps — belief and profession. In the early ages, and in all ages, it is not enough for men to believe; but they must also turn to the Lord, make an open declaration of their belief; for thus only can the religion of Christ advance, by the avowed convictions and the associated action of his disciples. Said Jesus to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born of *water* and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." He that is truly a Christian will desire to persuade others also to become Christians; and to that end he will declare his belief, and observe the outward means and ordinances by which it is nourished, and "adorn the doctrine" by a useful and holy life.

22. *The church which was in Jerusalem.* If any church was entitled to arrogate to itself peculiar claims, and assume a preëminence over others, it would seem to be this; which might be said to be planted by the Saviour himself, and enjoyed the care of not one, but all the apostles. For any church, however, eastern or western, Greek or Romish, to attempt to lord it over the faith of their brethren, is an error and sin, only pardonable from the days of darkness and of despotism in which it originally arose; but which to repeat, in the nineteenth century, on the part of every little offshoot of schism,

23 should go as far as Antioch. Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with 24 purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith: and much 25 people was added unto the Lord. Then departed Barnabas to 26 Tarsus, for to seek Saul: and when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

every mushroom sect, is as ridiculous as it is wicked. The church thunders, which carry a certain tone of grandeur when launched from the Vatican, become contemptible when flung from the conventicles of yesterday.—*They sent forth Barnabas.* Being a Hellenist, chap. iv. 36, ix. 27, he was well qualified to act favorably upon the Gentile converts at Antioch. Besides, the contiguity of Cyprus, his former residence, to Antioch, had perhaps already opened to him an acquaintance in that city.

23. *The grace of God*, i. e. his favor, kindness, in admitting the Gentiles also to the blessings of the Messiah's kingdom. It filled the heart of Barnabas with joy, that the bands of Jewish exclusiveness were not to be swathed around the limbs of the infant church; but that it was to go forth in freedom, to win the love and obedience of Jew and Gentile, bond and free.—*With purpose of heart.* Or, to drop the idiom, with hearty purpose, with steady and earnest determination, to adhere to the holy cause they had espoused.

24, 25. *A good man*, &c. The several distinguished qualifications here enumerated, pointed him out as a fit messenger from the church at Jerusalem to the converts of Antioch.

—*Much people was added*, &c. The natural result of the labors of so good and gifted a man; though it might

be inferred, from chap. xiv. 12, that he produced the effect rather by the weight of his character, and the zeal of his efforts, than by the power of his preaching. Simple, earnest goodness, if it be informed and *vitalized* by a spiritual faith, is itself more eloquent than words, and impregnates multitudes of minds with its own life. A good man may be said to have a magazine of spiritual forces concentrated in himself, which are capable of acting in every direction at the same moment, with an energy which neither time nor use can exhaust. The more good he confers on others, the more grows his own goodness. “Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom.”—*To Tarsus.* The harvest is so large, and the reapers so few, that Barnabas travels to Tarsus, the city of Saul; whither he had gone to escape the machinations of his enemies, chap. ix. 29, 30, in order to obtain his services at the important post of Antioch.

26. *A whole year.* The great cities of the East were important stations for the establishment of Christianity, and hence we find that much time was devoted to *Antioch*, Corinth, Ephesus. Chap. xviii. 11, xx. 31.—*They assembled*, i. e. for worship and preaching. Heb. x. 25.

And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and 27  
28

— *The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.* This remarkable fact has called forth a variety of questions, as to the origin and intention of the name. The followers of Christ did not, probably, themselves originate this designation; for, both before and after this time, they went under the title of *disciples*, chap. i. 15, xx. 7; *believers*, chap. v. 14, 1 Tim. iv. 12; *saints*, chap. ix. 13, xxvi. 10; *brethren*, chap. vi. 3, xviii. 14; *the church*, chap. ii. 47, xv. 22; *the men of this way*, chap. ix. 2, xxii. 4. Only two cases besides the present occur, in the New Testament, where the word *Christian* is used, and in one of these it is employed by Agrippa, chap. xxvi. 28, and in the other by Peter, as if it were a term of reproach, used by enemies. 1 Peter iv. 16. If it had arisen among the disciples themselves, it would naturally have been more generally used. Again, it did not originate among the Jews, for they preferred the scornful epithet of *Nazarene*, chap. xxiv. 5; or *Galileans*, chap. ii. 7; and if they had called the disciples by the name of Christ, Messiah, they might have been regarded as assenting to the claims of Jesus to that distinguished office. And the fact that the Jews did not apply the name of *Christians*, indicates that it was not a title of contempt, for if it had been, they would have gladly appropriated it in their vocabulary of abuse. The more probable supposition, therefore, is, that the name arose at Antioch, among the Gentile converts to Christianity, or their pagan friends. It has not a Greek, but a Roman, ending; and, it is likely, took its origin among that portion of the population; for Antioch was then under subjection to Rome. The general custom was followed by which

disciples were called from their masters, as *Platonists* from *Plato*; *Aristotelians* from *Aristotle*; *Pythagoreans* from *Pythagorus*; *Epicureans* from *Epicurus*. That the name was extensively known and used, is evident from Tacitus, the Roman historian, who says that Nero “inflicted exquisite punishment upon those people who were commonly known by the name of Christians. They had their denomination from *Christos*, who, in the reign of Tiberius, was put to death as a criminal by the procurator, Pontius Pilate.” It has been thought by some that the word *called* is to be taken in a sense in which it is sometimes used, of called by divine appointment, or warned by God. Chap. x. 22. But the more rational interpretation is, that as no special revelation was needed, none was given, and that the word has the simple sense of *called*, as in Rom. vii. 3, where it occurs. It is unavoidable that different denominations should be called by different names, to distinguish them from one another; and the evil of sectarianism cannot be cured by the resumption of any primitive title, though it be even that first given to the disciples at Antioch, as has been practically demonstrated at the present day, in the use of this very name. On the contrary, the only remedy for the present belligerent attitude of the Christian church within itself, and the civil war raging among the followers of the Prince of Peace, is the wider diffusion of Christian knowledge, charity and piety, and the nearer approach of the disciples to their common centre, Christ, which will be a nearer approximation of all the diverging lines of the Christian brotherhood to one another.

27, 28. *In these days.* An indefinite expression, used in transitions

signified by the Spirit, that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of **Claudius Cesar**. Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in

from one event to another. Mat. iii. 1. — *Prophets*, i. e. religious teachers or preachers, who were also sometimes gifted with a knowledge of future events. Rom. xii. ; 1 Cor. xii. xiv. ; Eph. ii. 20, iii. 5, 11. — *Agabus*. Nothing further is known of this individual except from the present passage and chap. xxi. 10, 11. It is generally inferred that he was a Christian disciple. — *Signified by the Spirit*. Or, was specially informed by a divine revelation. It was an event desirable to be known beforehand, in order that preparation might be made against the necessities of the time. — *Great dearth*, i. e. a severe famine. The prevailing ignorance of agriculture, the desolation of war, and the want of facilities of intercourse, rendered the ancient nations great sufferers, at certain periods, for the want of food. — *Throughout all the world*. It is contended by Lardner and other critics, with much justice, that this expression here signifies, not the whole habitable earth, or even the Roman empire, but the country of Judea. Luke iv. 25, xxi. 26. Several dreadful famines occurred about this period, in history, in different countries; but the one in question would seem to be limited to Judea, for the brethren in Antioch, ver. 29, determined to send relief to the sufferers there. Rom. xv. 26; 1 Cor. xvi. 1; 2 Cor. ix. — *Which came to pass in the days of Claudius Cesar*. Cesar is excluded from the text by Griesbach, and other editors of the New Testament, as unworthy of admittance. In the reign of Claudius, emperor of Rome, which began A. D. 40, and ended A. D. 53, there occurred no less than four famines,

which visited various countries: the first Italy, the second Greece, another Italy, and still a fourth Judea. The latter began about A. D. 44, and continued till A. D. 46. Josephus relates that “the arrival of Helena, queen of Adiabenes, at Jerusalem, was a great blessing to the people; for, the city laboring at that time under a heavy famine, so that a great many perished for want, the queen sent abroad several of her officers, some to Alexandria for the purchase of corn, others to Cyrus to buy up dried figs. These having used the utmost expedition, as soon as they returned, she distributed food to those that were necessitous. By this liberality, she laid a lasting obligation upon our whole nation. Moreover, her son, Izates, having heard of the famine, sent a large sum of money to the chief men of Jerusalem.” The same author also states that this famine happened in the time of Cuspius Fadus, and his successor, Tiberius Alexander; which would be from the fourth to the fifth and sixth year of the reign of Claudius, and from A. D. 44 to A. D. 45 and 46. While the queen Helena and her son, Jewish proselytes, relieved their brethren in the faith, the Christians also were not forgotten by their more fortunate friends of Antioch and other places.

29. *The disciples*, i. e. at Antioch. They are still designated by their former title, and not by the new name of ver. 26. — *Send relief unto the brethren, &c.* This shows that the distress was limited to Judea; else the disciples would not have been able to yield succor to those at a distance, but would have been absorbed

Judea. Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

in their own calamities. It is clear from this, in connexion with other passages, that there was no community of goods generally prevailing in the Christian churches; but that the ancient landmarks of property were still unremoved, except by the enlarged and generous spirit of philanthropy. In the generosity and kind-heartedness of the brethren for one another, we trace the germs of that philanthropy which has in every succeeding age borne fruits to man and praise to God, and which is yet to spread more widely, until that period of peace and universal benevolence shall come, which is the burden of prophecy and the vision of hope;

“When the bright chain of love, that God  
hath given,  
Extends from heart to heart, and thence to  
heaven.”

**30. The elders.** This class of persons is here mentioned, for the first time, in connexion with the Christian church, and a few words will be proper in explanation. Elders were officers in the Jewish commonwealth, at the head of their respective tribes, in accordance, perhaps, with earlier patriarchal usages, in which the oldest persons bore a species of unofficial rule on account of their age, experience and gravity. Moses drew these to his aid as a kind of national council. Ex. iv. 29, xii. 21, xxiv. 1, 9; Josh. xxiii. 2. The members of the Sanhedrim were also called *elders*, and likewise the officers of the synagogue. The name, therefore, is borrowed from the Jewish people, and is employed by the New Testament writers as an old term, applicable to the new state of things. The word may be properly translated *presbyters*, as this term is de-

rived from the original Greek *πρεσβύτεροι*. It is probable that those thus called were usually wise and aged men, whose long-tryed experience and fidelity pointed them out as the suitable almoners of the benevolent donations for the poor, and fitted to perform other religious duties; rather than as officers filling a certain definitive post, and constituting one essential link in that gradation of principalities and powers, which some erroneously deem absolutely necessary to the very existence of a Christian church. That the *elders* or *presbyters* were the same as, or similar to, the *bishops* or *overseers*, is evident from Acts xx. 17, 28; Tit. i. 5, 7. Such is the view of Hammond, Robinson, and many others. The use of the term, at the present day, is often highly inappropriate; and when it is applied to the young and crude, it carries with it no serious impression, but appears almost like a burlesque upon sacred things. To designate a youthful and inexperienced pastor or preacher as an elder, is in bad taste, as well as poor theology. If the Scripture title is to be used, let it be applied to those who are elders indeed, and are clothed with the venerableness of years and gravity of character. In the present case, as in many others, incalculable harm has been done to the Bible, by carrying a preconceived theory into its interpretation, and measuring every thing by this self-constituted standard. Rather let the Scriptures speak for themselves in their own beautiful simplicity, and then they will speak with their divine power and persuasiveness. “Spare that book.”

## CHAPTER XII.

*The Martyrdom of James, Imprisonment and Rescue of Peter, and Death of Herod.*

NOW about that time, Herod the king stretched forth his 2 hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the 3 brother of John with the sword. — And because he saw it

## CHAPTER XII.

1. *About that time.* The chronology is uncertain; but it is supposed that the persecution of the Christians, recorded in this chapter, occurred about A. D. 44. — *Herod the king.* This was Herod Agrippa, the Elder, or the Great, son of Aristobulus, the son of Herod the Great by Mariamne. Aristobulus was put to death by his father, through jealousy and court cabals. Herod Agrippa was educated at Rome, where he contracted dissipated and extravagant habits, in the luxurious reign of Tiberius. He was favored by the succeeding emperors, Caius Caligula and Claudius Cesar, and appointed king over the territories of Batanea, Trachonitis, Abilene, Galilee, Samaria, and Judea — a dominion about as extensive as that of Herod the Great, his grandfather. Archelaus, Mat. ii. 22, and Herod Antipas, who put John the Baptist to death, were his uncles, Mat. xiv. 1 — 12, and Herodias was his sister. The Agrippa introduced in chap. xxv. 13, and also Bernice, were his children. He ruled seven years, from A. D. 37 to A. D. 44. The manner of his death is related in ver. 23. — *Stretched forth his hands.* Or, undertook, or proceeded, with violence. — *To vex.* Or, to do evil to, or to maltreat, or afflict.

2. *He killed James, &c.* i. e. he beheaded him. There were four kinds of capital punishment for crimes among the Jews, viz., beheading, stoning, burning, and strangling. Killing with the sword, or beheading, was the most ignominious, and constituted, according to the Tal-

mud, the appropriate penalty for seducing the people to a false worship. Crucifixion was a Roman mode of punishment; but stoning, inflicted upon Stephen, and beheading, in the present instance, were Jewish customs. The James here spoken of was called James the Greater in contradistinction from James the Less. He was the son of Zebedee and Salome, Mat. xxvii. 56, Mark xv. 40, and brother of John, the beloved disciple. Mat. x. 2. He was doubtless selected as being one of the most prominent members of the Christian body, whose loss would be severely felt. That cup, which his Master had predicted would be given him to drink, was mixed for him by the sanguinary Agrippa. Mat. xx. 28. Though not the first martyr to Christianity, he was called the apostolic proto-martyr, as he was the first of the twelve who sealed his fidelity with his blood. It is related by Clement of Alexandria, though the story is probably legendary, that “as the apostle was led forth to the place of execution, the person who had accused him was so touched with the courage and constancy which he displayed, that he repented of what he had done, came and fell down at his feet, and earnestly begged pardon for what he had said against him. St. James tenderly raised him up, kissed him, and said to him, ‘Peace be to thee, my son, and the pardon of thy faults.’ At this, his former accuser publicly professed himself a Christian, and so both were beheaded at the same time.”

3. *Because he saw it pleased the*

pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. Then were the days of unleavened bread. And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to

*Jews.* The character of Agrippa was directly the reverse of his grandfather, Herod the Great, in this respect; for, according to Josephus, Herod was continually obliging foreign states and cities by large bounties, but did very few things to gratify the Jews; "whereas Agrippa was of a mild and gentle disposition, and good to all men; he was beneficent to strangers, but especially kind to the Jews, his countrymen, and sympathized with them in all their troubles. For which reason, also, he lived much at Jerusalem, observed the Jewish institutions, practised the purity they required, and did not let a day pass without worshipping God according to the law." Lardner remarks on this, that "his zeal for the institutions and customs of the Jews, and his desire to oblige that people, very much confirm the account St. Luke gives of his forwardness in persecuting the disciples of Jesus." Like many other rulers, he was actuated by a love of popularity more than by a regard to the right and the good, and was willing to gratify the people in their likes and dislikes, though at the expense of justice and humanity.—*Proceeded further to take Peter also.* He aimed his blows at the chief men, thinking thus more readily to arrest the cause of Christianity in its infancy. His success in the case of James emboldened him to new outrages.—*The days of unleavened bread,* i. e. the Jewish Passover, in commemoration of the preservation of the first-born of the Hebrews, when those of the Egyptians were cut off by the destroying angel; and of the deliverance from bondage. It was kept in the month

Abib or Nisan, corresponding to our April, and occupied eight days. From the circumstance that only this kind of bread was eaten during this period, it was entitled "the feast of unleavened bread."

4. *Four quaternions of soldiers.* A quaternion consisted of a body of four, so that the whole number was sixteen. The night being divided by the *clepsydra*, or water-clock, into four watches, from sunset to sunrise, a company of four men was required for each watch. Two were in the cell itself, and connected, as is supposed, to Peter by chains, so that he could not remove without their knowing it; and the other two stood sentry before the door of the cell of the prison. There was, therefore, the greatest care taken to guard against an escape, and every hope of human relief was extinct. But doubtless the deliverances of the past were brought to mind, and experience infused strength into faith. Chap. v. 18–20.—*After Easter,* i. e. more correctly, "after the Passover." The present festival of Easter, as observed by part of the Christian world, was not then established, though this translation would give the idea that it was the Christian, and not the Jewish, feast to which Herod paid regard. Bede says "that *Eostur-monath*, which is now called the Paschal month, had its name from a goddess called *Eostre*, and to whom at that time they used to celebrate festivals." This was a goddess worshipped by the Anglo-Saxons before their conversion to Christianity; and hence, after their profession of the gospel, they changed their old idolatrous rite into a celebration of the

5 bring him forth to the people. Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church 6 unto God for him. — And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains; and the keepers before the door

resurrection of Christ, which occurred about the same time of the year. As our Lord rose three days after his death, which occurred on the next day after the Paschal supper, Easter, among Christians, fell at the same period as the Passover among the Jews. But, as observed by Dr. Clarke, “Perhaps there never was a more unhappy, not to say absurd translation. Every view we can take of this subject shows the gross impropriety of retaining a name every way exceptionable, and palpably absurd.” The circumstance that the translators belonged to the English Episcopal church led them, in the present case, as in some others, to give a modern and partisan dress to the simplicity of ancient history. Herod forbore to execute Peter during the feast of Passover, out of regard to the custom of the Jews, that criminals should not suffer at that time; though there had been a gross infraction of it in the crucifixion of Jesus. — *Bring him forth to the people*, i. e. according to the usage of the word, “to put him to death.”

5. *Prayer was made without ceasing*. Or, literally, “extended,” and figuratively “intense, fervent,” prayer was made for the endangered apostle. The eminence of Peter, and the value of his services to the Christian cause, naturally awaken the liveliest sympathy in his behalf. As all human aid was unavailing, the disciples resorted to Him who is a very present help in time of trouble, and who is mightier than the mightiest. 1 Thes. v. 25; Heb. xiii. 3, 18; James v. 16. They had full confidence in the efficacy of intercessory prayer,

and their faith was not disappointed. There are great encouragements held out in the Scriptures to the performance of this duty; and none who have habitually prayed for their friends, have probably ever doubted that their prayers were heard.

6. *Would have brought him forth*, i. e. for execution. — *The same night*, i. e. the night before the proposed martyrdom. — *Sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, &c.* Every circumstance is thrown into the account, to show how impossible was an escape. Peter was asleep, — the sleep of conscious virtue and of divine trust, — and had no concert with any friends without the prison, whose arrival he was expecting, and for which he was preparing. He was in the custody of sixteen men, who relieved each other so frequently that they could easily remain wakeful. Four men were on guard at once, two in the cell, and two watching the door without. That these men should all be buried in sleep at the same time, is incredible. They also acted under the fear of the penalty of death, if they suffered their prisoner to escape; and they actually incurred that punishment, as we learn from ver. 19, because he did escape. The apostles had been delivered before, and their enemies would not be likely to relax any of their regulations on the present occasion, but to be more rigid than ever in all their precautions. Chap. v. 19. Such, we infer, was in fact the case; for while, ordinarily, a prisoner was confined to only one soldier by a chain, in this case the apostle was bound to two, one arm to each respectively, so

kept the prison. And behold, the angel of the Lord came upon <sup>7</sup> him, and a light shined in the prison; and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from *his* hands. And the angel said unto him, <sup>8</sup> Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals: and so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me.

that the least motion on his part would attract the notice of his companions. Thus we see that every possible security was provided to prevent an escape. And, considering all the circumstances, we may say, without exaggeration, that no human force could have broken into the prison and taken out the apostle. The theories that have been invented, to account for his escape in a natural manner, are totally devoid of verisimilitude. They endeavor to account for what is miraculous by imagining what would be more than miraculous, and require a greater credulity to believe. To suppose that any friends could have stolen into his prison from without, eluded the sentinels at the door, entered his cell without molestation, removed his chains unknown to his associates, and snatched him from custody, without raising an alarm, is unnatural and inconceivable. It would require more faith to believe it, than to believe in the truth and reality of twenty miracles like the rescue of Peter. The apostle was the leading spirit of the Twelve, and his preservation from imminent danger and death was an object deserving the divine interposition — “*dignus vindice nodus*” — a difficulty worthy of such a solution.

7. *The angel of the Lord.* By *angel*, here, some understand any messenger, as a friend; or any method of interposition and help, as an earthquake or lightning; but such conjectures in reality involve the account in far greater difficulties than would the admission of angelic and miraculous interference, as usually

understood. It is harder to believe that any associate or friend of the prisoner could penetrate that closely-guarded cell, and free Peter without the knowledge of the sentinels, or that the lightning could melt off his chains, and break open the doors, without harm either to Peter or the guard, than to assent to a miraculous interposition. — *Came upon him.* Or, stood by him. — *A light shined in the prison.* Those that love to account for every remarkable event in the Scriptures in a natural way, conjecture that, in this case, it lightened. But it is wonderful that others were not also aroused by the explosion, if such were the fact. While, on the other hand, light and splendid appearances are the frequent accompaniments of miraculous events. Luke ii. 9; Acts ix. 3. — *Smote*, i. e. gently, so as to arouse him. — *His chains fell off from his hands.* The chains, with which he was bound with the right and left hand to each soldier, respectively. No art of man could have freed him from these manacles without the knowledge of his guard. And that the lightning should have discriminated so far as to melt his chains without injuring him or the soldiers; and that it should have awakened him, but not them; or stunned the four inside and outside, without further damage to them, — is next to a miracle, if it be not one itself.

8, 9. *Gird thyself*, i. e. gird the inner garment or tunic, which in sleep, or when unoccupied, the Orientals are accustomed to unloose for greater ease and comfort. — *Bind on thy*

- 9 And he went out, and followed him, and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision.
- 10 When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him.
- 11 And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and *from* all the expectation of the people
- 12 of the Jews. And when he had considered *the thing*, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark;

*sandals.* Which were simply soles, laced to the feet and ankles with thongs. — *Cast thy garment about thee*, i. e. put on the mantle or outer garment with which the whole body is invested, and which is laid aside at night. The several directions, relative to his dress, convey one interesting idea, viz., the self-possession and repose of mind, and sense of security, exhibited by the angel, and enjoined indirectly upon Peter. There was no occasion to fear — he was under a divine protector. — *Wist not*. Old English for *knew not*. — *Thought he saw a vision.* Awakened, as he was, out of sleep at dead of night, wholly unexpectedly to himself, and miraculously freed from his chains and confinement, it was perfectly natural that he should be in a manner bewildered, and hardly be able to determine whether the scene was real or not, but should be inclined to think that it was a visionary representation.

10. *The first and the second ward.* Or, “guard,” referring to the soldiers standing on sentry, at different posts. — *The iron gate*, i. e. probably covered with iron plates, as is customary at the present day. — *That leadeth unto the city.* The situation of the prison is unknown, but it has been conjectured that it was located in a tower in the wall of the city, and

that this iron gate led from the prison into the street of the town. — *Which opened to them of his own accord.* Or, grammatically, of *its* own accord, i. e. self-moved. The idea is, that it opened without any human instrumentality. Every item in the description indicates supernatural interposition. — *Passed on through one street, &c.* The angel conducted him as far as was necessary for safety, and then left him to his own efforts; whereas, had it been a human friend, he would probably have accompanied him to some place of safety, or the house of an acquaintance.

11. *When Peter was come to himself.* Or, had recovered his consciousness. The fact that he was in a state of bewilderment for a time, does not diminish the probability of a real interposition, or cast discredit on his evidence, but rather the contrary, since he candidly acknowledged precisely what was his state. — *From all the expectation, &c.* It appears that the Jews earnestly desired the death of the apostle, and that Herod was about to put his prisoner to death to gratify their sanguinary disposition.

12. *He came to the house of Mary.* The community of goods related in chap. ii. 44, 45, was not of such a nature that all parted with their houses and goods, as is evident from

where many were gathered together, praying. And as Peter is knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda. And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in and told how Peter stood before the gate. And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel. But Peter continued knocking. And when they

the present passage. Mary was the sister of Barnabas, Col. iv. 10.—*John, whose surname was Mark.* This was Mark the Evangelist. He accompanied Paul and Barnabas in some of their missionary excursions, and, as is supposed, wrote his Gospel at the instigation and with the aid of Peter.—*Many were gathered together praying,* i. e. for the release of the apostle. Ver. 5. Though he was in the extremity of danger, they did not despair of the aid of Heaven in his behalf. In times of peril, it was customary for the disciples to hold religious exercises in the night. Thus Pliny spoke of their assemblies in the night, and others brought their night-meetings as an accusation against the Christians.

13, 14. *Knocked at the door of the gate.* Or, the door of the porch or vestibule.—*Came to hearken.* It was a time of persecution and terror, and the Christians naturally took precautions to guard against any surprise from their enemies. It was customary, however, at all times, for the person calling without to mention his name to the porter within the house.—*Rhoda.* Which signifies, in Greek, “a rose.” Grotius observes, that the Orientals gave the names of flowers to their daughters, as Susanna, a lily, and Hadessa, a myrtle, &c.—*Opened not the gate for gladness.* There is great naturalness in this stroke of the historian, such as a fictitious writer would have hardly imagined. Her joy, instead of leading her to admit Peter

instantly, as would seem to be the spontaneous dictate, impelled her first to gladden the company with the joyful news of his escape.

15. *It is his angel.* By this is understood by some a messenger sent from Peter, or a friend who had brought a message from him; but the more general and probable opinion is, that it was regarded as his tutelary angel or guardian spirit, according to the popular superstitions of the Eastern nations, in which the disciples no doubt shared with the rest of their countrymen. Mat. xviii. 10. In addition to this idea, it was also supposed that an angel would assume the voice and figure of the individual whom he represented, after his decease. The popular impression upon this subject would be heightened by the fact of the improbability of Peter's liberation from prison, and by the natural astonishment into which they were thrown by his sudden appearance. As remarked by Doddridge and Newcome, “A Jewish opinion about guardian angels, or the souls of men converted into ministering spirits, may be here referred to, without establishing its truth.”

16. *Saw him.* “Seen him” would be the proper translation, to correspond with the pluperfect tense of the foregoing verb, “had opened.”—*They were astonished.* Hence it appears, they had entered into no conspiracy to free the apostle; and though they prayed most fervently that he might be delivered, yet they

17 had opened *the door*, and saw him, they were astonished. But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go show these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place.

18 — Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among 19 the soldiers, what was become of Peter. And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that *they* should be put to death. And he went down from Judea to Cesarea, and *there* abode.

had so little hope and faith, that they could hardly believe their own senses, when their prayers were answered.

17. *Beckoning unto them with the hand.* Or, as Bloomfield says, "Waving the hand downwards," to enjoin silence. He feared lest, if they made an outcry, the Jews would be alarmed, and his escape be discovered before he could flee to a place of security.—*How the Lord had brought him, &c.* He regarded his deliverance as miraculous. "How vain is the power of man when opposed to that of God! Peter is seized by order of the king; he is enclosed within a triple wall; he is watched by more than a usual number of guards, and he is fastened by a chain to his keepers: but all these precautions are to no purpose, and had they been multiplied tenfold, they would have been equally ineffectual. The chains dropped from his hands; the keepers are thrown into a deep sleep, and the iron gates open of their own accord. Vain is the contest between an arm of flesh and the arm of Omnipotence! All strength is His; the powers of nature are only his energy; let not mortals, however exalted, dare to oppose his councils." KENRICK.—*Unto James.* This was James the Less, so called, as James the Elder or Greater had been put to death. Ver. 2. He was

the son of Alpheus and Mary; "the brother," or cousin of our Lord, the author of the epistle by his name, and the president or bishop of the church at Jerusalem. See Mat. x. 3; Mark xv. 40; Acts xv. 13, 22; Gal. i. 19, ii. 12. Peter directs them to inform James, as being the leading officer in the church.—*To the brethren.* Many were probably elsewhere supplicating Heaven in behalf of their doomed friend. The ardent nature of Peter, independently of the common ties of Christian brotherhood, had knit many souls in closest affection to himself. They prayed not only for Peter the apostle, but for Peter the beloved.—*Went into another place.* Whither is unknown. Cesarea, Rome, and other places, are conjectured, by various critics respectively. Antioch is as probable as any one, since we find him there in Gal. ii. 11, and back again at Jerusalem in Acts xv. 7.

18. *As soon as it was day.* The guard continued asleep till morning, and then first discovered the escape of their prisoner.—*No small stir among the soldiers.* They knew well the severity of military discipline, and shrank from the terrible penalty which threatened them.

19. *Sought for him — examined the keepers.* He took two measures to regain his prisoner—a general search, and a particular examination

And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon. But they came with one accord to him, and having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace, because their country was nourished by the king's *country*.

of the sentinels. — *That they should be put to death.* Literally, “led forth;” by which is meant, according to an idiom, led forth to die. It was customary to inflict a severe punishment, usually death, upon guards who suffered a prisoner, committed to their keeping, to escape; or the same penalty was imposed upon the keepers as would have been exacted of the prisoner who had fled. Herod, in the present case, had no belief in a miracle being wrought; or, if he had, labored to make an opposite impression upon the public; and therefore held the soldiers strictly accountable, and treated them as if Peter had escaped by their connivance or assistance; — unhappy victims of a tyrant's displeasure! His passions were disappointed of their gratification in putting the holy apostle to death, and he wreaks his insane anger upon the innocent tools of his own power! It was time that Heaven should move, in its might, and sweep such a pest from the face of the earth. — *To Cesarea, and there abode.* This city became the head-quarters of Roman splendor and idolatry in Judea, and the rulers of the country often made it their abode. Chap. xxv. 1, 4. The particular object of Herod at this time is related by Josephus, in his Antiquities, who gives, throughout this passage of history, important corroborations of the narrative of Luke. “Having now reigned three whole years over all Judea, he went to the city Cesarea, formerly called Strato's Tower. Here he celebrated shows in honor of Cesar, a festival having been appointed to be observed there at this time for his safety. On this occasion, there was

a vast resort of persons of rank and distinction, from all parts of the country.” The king remained there until his death, which occurred soon afterwards.

20. *Was highly displeased.* This is one word in Greek, and signifies “bore a hostile mind,” or, “intended war.” Agrippa could not actually make war upon these cities, for he and they were alike under the government of the Romans, who would permit no hostilities among their common vassals. But he was probably incensed at some collision between the commercial interests of Tyre and Sidon, and his own city of Cesarea, and opportunities were doubtless open, if not for direct war, yet for the infliction of serious injuries upon the Phoenician cities; for they depended chiefly upon their maritime and manufacturing resources for prosperity, and looked to Galilee and Judea for their bread stuffs. Any interruption of trade, therefore, would prove detrimental to their interests. — *Came with one accord*, i. e. ambassadors came conjointly from both cities, Tyre and Sidon. It was a matter that affected the interests of both places. — *Having made Blastus, &c.* Having prevailed with Blastus for his intercession with Herod, as he was a chamberlain, or master of the king's bed-chamber; an officer high in authority and influence, as was usual for persons occupying that post in a royal court. — *Desired peace.* Not that there was war before, but they wished for a settlement of the existing difficulties. — *Because their country was nourished, &c.*, i. e. they were dependent upon the territories of Herod for their grain; a species

21 And upon a set day, Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon  
22 his throne, and made an oration unto them. And the people  
gave a shout, *saying*, *It is* the voice of a god, and not of a man.  
23 And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he  
gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave

of trade which they had carried on from very early times with Palestine. 1 Kings v. 9, 11; Ezra iii. 7; Ezek. xxvii. 17. Nothing is related in Josephus, or any other historian of that period, of the animosity of Herod to the Phoenicians, as it was not perhaps of much moment, compared with many occurrences of the times. But it is appropriately introduced by Luke, as explaining the occasion on which the adulation of the people was paid to the king as to a god.

21-23. *And upon a set day, &c.* The account of the death of Herod, by Josephus, corresponds so well with that here given by Luke, that it will be proper to give it in full. "On the second day of the shows, early in the morning, he came into the theatre, dressed in a robe of silver, of most curious workmanship. The rays of the rising sun, reflected from so splendid a garb, gave him a majestic and awful appearance. In a short time they began, in several parts of the theatre, flattering acclamations, which proved pernicious to him. They called him a god, and entreated him to be propitious to them, saying, 'Hitherto we have respected you as a man; but now we acknowledge you to be more than mortal.' The king neither reproved these persons, nor rejected the impious flattery. Soon after this, casting his eyes upwards, he saw an owl sitting upon a certain cord over his head. He perceived it to be a messenger of evil to him, as it had been before (according to a German soothsayer, when he was imprisoned by Tiberius) of his prosperity, and was struck with the deepest concern.

Immediately after this he was seized with pain in his bowels, extremely violent at the very first. Then, turning himself toward his friends, he spoke to them in this manner: 'I, your god, am required to leave this world—fate instantly confuting these false applauses just bestowed upon me; I, who have been called immortal, am hurried away to death. But God's appointment must be submitted to. Nor has our condition in this world been despicable; we have lived in the state which is accounted happy.' While he was speaking these words, he was oppressed with the increase of his pains. He was carried, therefore, with all haste to his palace. These pains in his bowels continually tormenting him, he expired in five days' time, in the fifty-fourth year of his age, and of his reign the seventh." The correspondences between this account and the briefer narrative of Luke are numerous and striking, while the differences also bear witness to their independence and truth. (1.) Both assign Cesarea as the place of Herod's death. (2.) Luke speaks of a set day; Josephus styles it the second day of the shows. (3.) They agree respecting the splendor of the king's dress, one giving a minute, and the other a general, description of it. (4.) Luke says, he sat upon his throne, and made an oration; the Jewish historian represents him going to the theatre, to preside over the shows, where, probably, a kind of throne was erected for the convenience of the monarch. (5.) Luke apparently attributes the impious flattery of the people to their

up the ghost. — But the word of God grew and multiplied. 24 And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they 25 had fulfilled *their* ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.

satisfaction with his speech, while Josephus introduces it directly after his account of the majesty and splendor of his apparel; but both causes might have contributed to produce it. (6.) Both represent him as receiving without rebuke the blasphemous adulation of the people. (7.) Both harmonize essentially respecting his disease, both as to its cause as a judgment of Heaven against his impiety, and as to its nature, as loathsome and agonizing; though it has been observed, Luke, supposed to be a physician, Col. iv. 14, describes the symptoms, while Josephus states results. — *It is the voice of a god.* By which is to be understood the term, in that subsidiary sense, common among the Greeks and Romans, who had many divinities in their mythology. — *The angel of the Lord smote him.* By this is indicated a special interposition, or judgment from God, described in terms common among the Jews. Ex. xii. 27; 2 Sam. xxiv. 16. — *Because he gave not God the glory.* Josephus assigns the same cause of his disease and death essentially, though not in direct terms; for he says the acclamations proved pernicious to him, and that the king neither reprobated these persons nor rejected the impious flattery. — *He was eaten of worms.* What his disorder was, is matter of conjecture, though it would appear to be the same as that with which Antiochus Epiphanes is said to have died, which is described in 2 Mac. ix. 5; also Herod the Great and Maximilian. It was a most hideous and painful disease, in which the flesh became putrefied, and worms came forth as from the body of the

dead. — *Gave up the ghost.* Or, more properly translated, "expired." The death of Herod occurred about A. D. 44.

24. *But the word of God grew.* This is spoken as by way of contrast with the end of the persecutor. Herod, the enemy of the church, the slayer of an apostle, dies in agony and shame; but the word of God comes forth from the fiery trial in immortal brightness and power, to spread its blessed influences over wider circles of human beings.

25. *Barnabas and Saul returned,* i. e. to Antioch, from which they had been deputed on a mission of benevolence to the poor at Jerusalem. Chap. xi. 29, 30. — *Fulfilled their ministry.* By which is meant, in the present case, their service in behalf of the temporal, rather than the spiritual, wants of their brethren. — *Took with them John.* See note on ver. 12. We behold these indefatigable men of God pursuing their mission with a faith that never faltered, and a love that never cooled. If mighty were the miracles and wonders with which their authority was attended, even more mighty were the resolution of will, and the fortitude of endurance, with which they buffeted the pelting tempest of persecution, and pressed onward in their glorious career. O, what a living, salient force was theirs, yet how tempered with a divine peace — the repose of the most vigorous and harmonious life!

The church has now weathered the second storm of persecution, but one of the sacred band has fallen beneath the headsman's sword. The Twelve are again broken in upon,

## CHAPTER XIII.

*Paul and Barnabas go upon a Mission into Cyprus and Asia Minor. The Discourse of Paul at Antioch.*

**N**OW there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been

and their shattered ring is never more made whole. But with losses come helps. The arm of the Lord is again bared, and an apostle is delivered, and a persecutor laid low — Peter is snatched from the very jaws of destruction, and Herod is hurled from the summit of his glory. Could we read the Acts of the Apostles with a fresh mind, no history on earth, except the evangelic record, would be more moving and wonderful, more grand and pathetic. As the curtain is drawn aside from one scene after another, we seem to be witnessing a new enactment of the great drama of creation — the formation of a new heavens and a new earth; new lights take their places in the firmament; new flowers and trees spring from the regenerated soil; new creatures bound into being; new forces begin to act, new elements to combine; and, though there are toils, and fears, and sins, invading the newly-planted Eden of the Lord — though there are seen the stains of the martyr's blood — though the footsteps of danger, and the whispers of the tempter, penetrate into this hallowed creation — we yet seem to hear the ancient benediction of the Maker — “and, behold, it was very good”!

## CHAPTER XIII.

The history, from this point, is almost exclusively occupied with the travels and labors of Paul. The chief interest of the cause is also transferred from the holy land to Gentile countries.

1. *Antioch.* This populous and frequented city was a fine radiating point for the diffusive light of Christianity. And as soon as a church had been formed by preachers from Jerusalem, fleeing hither for their lives, chap. xi. 19, it became itself a living centre of influence, in turn, and despatched missionaries to yet new fields of labor. Such is the expansive benevolence of the gospel.

— *Prophets and teachers.* It has been inferred from Rom. xii. 6, 7; 1 Cor. xii. 28; Eph. iv. 11, that there was a distinction between these classes, but of what nature cannot be certainly determined; perhaps *prophets* were public, and *teachers* private, instructors of the church; though the same persons might hold both offices, the difference consisting in gifts rather than in individuals. — *Barnabas.* Chap. ix. 27, xi. 22, 26. — *Simeon that was called Niger.* A Latin cognomen, meaning “black.” He was so called probably on account of his color. His history is unknown. — *Lucius.* This is the same individual, in all likelihood, mentioned in Rom. xvi. 21. — *Cyrene.* A city in Northern Africa. Chap. ii. 10, and note. — *Manaen, which had been brought up with.* Or, as the margin better reads, “foster brother.” Nothing further is known of this person, except the interesting fact here stated, that he was the youthful companion of Herod, agreeably to the custom of the East, by which the sons of princes and rulers have lads of their own age brought up with them as their play-

brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid *their* hands on 3

mates and school-fellows. Many cases like the above are cited from ancient authors. Though educated amidst pomp and luxury, Manaen yet proved faithful to the highest convictions of his soul, and welcomed the gospel, when offered to him, as the guide of life. — *Herod the tetrarch*, i. e. Herod Antipas, Mat. xiv. 1, not Herod Agrippa, chap. xii. He was the son of Herod the Great, who sent him and his brother Archelaus, Mat. ii. 22, in their youth, to Rome to be educated. His connexion with Manaen was earlier in life, in the nursery.

2. *Ministered to the Lord*. Performed religious services of prayer and praise. See note on Luke i. 23. — *Fasting*. It is the opinion of Kenrick, that these exercises of supplication and fasting were of an unusually solemn kind, and instituted for the purpose of invoking miraculous aid. For this aid, “though sometimes given unasked, could at other times only be procured by prayer, and that of the most solemn and earnest kind. Accordingly, our Saviour says, when speaking of demons, ‘This kind goeth not out, but by prayer and fasting.’ Mat. xvii. 21.”

— *The Holy Ghost said*. There is no assertion or implication here of the personality of the Holy Spirit apart from God himself, as has been conceded by Trinitarian writers themselves. See Wilson’s remarkable Concessions of Trinitarians. Clarke paraphrases thus: “A revelation of the divine will was made to some person present;” and Kuinoel says, “The Divine Spirit, namely, God, admonished them by some one belonging to the church; by a proph-

et” — *Separate me*. Old idiom, for “separate for me,” or, “to me.” The doctrine among believers in High Church measures, and the Papal or Episcopal mode of ecclesiastical government and apostolic succession, is, that Saul and Barnabas were set apart and consecrated as apostles at this time. But there is no proof. On the contrary, the present consecration was not an investiture for a general and perpetual office, but an appointment to a particular work, a missionary tour in Asia Minor and the Levant. Besides, if such a consecration took place, it was under the sanction and auspices of inferior, or at most of equal, officers of the church with Paul and Barnabas themselves. A fountain cannot flow higher than its source. Paul derives, too, his authority from a different origin, in Gal. i. 1. Barnabas, moreover, is seldom called an apostle, and that not directly. Chap. xiv. 4; 1 Cor. ix. 6. They had already preached the gospel before this time, chap. xi. 25, 26, and exercised as much power as afterwards, so far as gifts and influences were concerned. The idea that Paul was chosen by Jesus to occupy the place of Judas, which the apostles filled without authority by the choice of Matthias; or that he was substituted in lieu of James the Greater, who suffered martyrdom, chap. xii. 2, and that Barnabas was to take the post of James the Less, who was bishop of the church at Jerusalem, is mere conjecture, without proof or probability. — *The work*. Not an office, but a work, a mission abroad.

3. *Fasted and prayed*. These were not the same exercises as those spoken of in ver. 2, but specially

4 them, they sent *them* away. — So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they 5 sailed to Cyprus. And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And 6 they had also John to *their* minister. And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a

designed to dismiss the apostles on their great errand of benevolence. — *They laid their hands on them.* This was a moral, not an official act; designed not to confer the gifts of the Spirit, or qualifications for their work, or authority from any ecclesiastical body, but to invoke a blessing upon those beloved and gifted ones, who were about to plunge into the midnight of the Gentile world, and encounter all the terrible dangers and sufferings of persecution. Paul repeatedly and earnestly asserts his apostolic authority from God, not from man. Rom. i. 1; 1 Cor. i. 1; 2 Cor. i. 1; Gal. i. 1; Eph. i. 1; Col. i. 1; 2 Tim. i. 1.

4. *Being sent forth by the Holy Ghost.* It is conceded by Williams, a Trinitarian writer, that the simple sense of this passage is, that "Barnabas and Saul were, by divine direction, sent out from the church of Antioch, on a special mission to the heathen;" and by Kuinoel that they acted "under the monition and revelation of the Spirit of God," which is God. — *Seleucia.* This was the port of Antioch, situated about 15 miles west of that city, on the Mediterranean Sea, at the mouth of the River Orontes, in Syria. It took its name from Seleucus Nicanor, — one of the generals and successors of Alexander the Great, — by whom it was built. — *Sailed to Cyprus.* This island is about 60 miles south-west from Seleucia, in the Mediterranean, or in that part of it called *the Sea of Cilicia*. See note on chap. iv. 36. This was the first journey of Paul.

5. They were probably induced to visit this island, because it had been the country of Barnabas, and the gospel had already been preached there before. Chap. xi. 19. — *Salamis.* This city was the capital, situated on the south-east part of Cyprus. It was built by Teucer, who gave it the name of the island of Salamis, from which he had been banished. It was subject to earthquakes. It has been successively called *Constantia* and *Salina*. — *In the synagogues of the Jews.* The Jews were uniformly addressed first by the disciples, and if they turned a deaf ear, the apostles then resorted to the Gentiles. The synagogues furnished excellent openings for preaching Christianity to the Jews. — *They had also John to their minister.* Or, "for their servant," or, attendant. Chap. xii. 12. He was the evangelist, otherwise called *Mark*. In travelling from place to place, occupied as they were with the important duties of their office, they naturally required some one to attend to their secular concerns, and provide for their conveniences and wants.

6. *Had gone through the island unto Paphos.* The extent of the island, from east to west, was between 400 and 500 miles, which was traversed by Paul and his companions in their work of mercy. — *Paphos*, situated on the western extremity of Cyprus, was celebrated for its luxury and licentiousness, and contained a splendid temple dedicated to Venus, whose worship was of the most absolute character. City and temple

false prophet, a Jew, whose name *was* Bar-jesus: which was 7 with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from

were both destroyed by an earthquake, so that not a trace was left. — *Sorcerer*. In the original, “*Magus*,” a magician. Chap. viii. 9. — *A false prophet*. Or, pretended teacher, who hypocritically professed inspiration. — *Bar-jesus*, i. e. the son of Jesus or Joshua, *Bar* being the Syriac for *son*; thus Barjona, signifying the son of Jonas, Bartholomew the son of Tolmai.

7. *The deputy*. The original is “*proconsul*.” It was the custom of the Romans, after the accession of Augustus to the empire, to divide their provinces into two classes; one of which belonged to the emperor, and was under the administration of officers called *proprietors*, but the other to the senate and Roman people, and was governed by *proconsuls*. Cyprus had been a propretorian province, but it had been transferred, before the present time, as also Narbonese Gaul, to the senate, and the presiding officer was therefore called a *proconsul*, as in the text; for a coin has been discovered containing an inscription employing the very same title of *proconsul* in relation to Proclus, who next succeeded Sergius Paulus in the government of this island. An ancient inscription, in the time of Caligula, the predecessor of Claudius, the present emperor, also styles Aquilius Scaura *proconsul* of the province of Cyprus. The accuracy of Luke, therefore, in applying this title to the ruler of the island, is triumphantly vindicated, and he is proved to be thoroughly acquainted with the facts which he related. These incidental proofs carry with them the greater

weight, because they are incidental. — *Sergius Paulus*. Nothing further is known of this individual except what is contained in the present record. — *Prudent*. Sensible, intelligent, sagacious. — *Who called for, &c.* His religious tendencies had been already exhibited in his having Elymas with him, for that individual, doubtless, mingled some truths with his tissue of pretence and sophistry, and the Roman turned towards the feeblest glimmering of light. When, therefore, he heard of the coming of the new preachers, he sought their instructions with candor and earnestness; nor sought in vain.

8. *Elymas*. This word means, in Arabic, “*Magus*,” or, “*sorcerer*,” and hence the epithet which was applied to him, on account of his profession. — *Seeking to turn away, &c.* This pretender not only sought to dispute the ground with the new claimants to public attention, but also to alienate their distinguished convert. His interest was involved in supplanting the apostles, and he hesitated at no means, however bad, to effect his purpose. The character of this individual, like his profession, resembled that of Simon Magus, whose history is related in chap. viii. Religion, truth, were nothing to him, except as they could be converted for or against his own selfish ends. “So prevalent was the practice of sorcery among the Jews,” according to the quotations of Lightfoot from the Talmuds, “that many of their judges, elders, or rabbins, are said to have attained such a proficiency in magic or sorcery as to surpass even those who made it

9 the faith. Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the 10 Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, and said, O full of all subtlety, and all mischief, *thou* child of the devil, *thou* enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the

their profession." Among the distinguished men of Rome, also, as in the present case of Sergius Paulus, there was often a curiosity to seek the aid of these religious pretenders, or sorcerers, who professed to be wise in whatever related to the gods and futurity. Though the gospel had many enemies and obstacles, there were none more fatal to its pure spirit of truth and holiness than these traders in divine things, these quacks in wisdom; for, whether they embraced it like Simon, or rejected it like Elymas, they alike breathed upon it a poisonous influence, and diffused a subtle *virus* through the faith of generations to come. The ancient philosophy, falsely so called, the superstitions of the East, and the craft of the old magicians, have infected the creeds and practice of large portions of Christian history, as could be substantiated by a recurrence to facts. It was not strange, therefore, that the apostles, clear-sighted as to the future fortunes of the church, shuddered at the approach of one of these men, as at the sight of an adder; and that Peter, on a former occasion, and Paul, at this time, expressed their strongest indignation, and even let fly the arrows of warning and punishment.

9. *Saul, who also is called Paul.* The "also" would be more appropriately placed after Paul. The name of *Saul* is dropped at this place, and that of *Paul* ever afterwards employed. The cause of this change is unknown. If the apostle had two names at the beginning, it is remarkable that only one has been used hitherto; and it is not probable that he adopted the name of Sergius Pau-

lus, as that would be for the greater to receive a title from the less; though the use of *Paul* as a constant designation may have arisen first among the family and attendants of the proconsul. The adoption of a new name did not, moreover, occur on account of Paul's conversion, because, even after that event, he still retained his former one. We therefore conclude, that the change took place out of deference to Gentile preferences of a Roman to a Hebrew name for the apostle to the heathen world. The meaning of *Saul* is, *desired*, that of *Paul*, *small, little*. But, though having different senses, the words may have been the same essentially in pronunciation, the Romans calling *Paul* whom the Jews called *Saul*; as the Dutch call *Hans*, whom we call *John*, and the French *Jean*, and the Greeks and Latins *Johannes*, and the Hebrews *Jochanan*.—*Filled with the Holy Ghost.* "Filled with the influence and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, not under the impression of spleen or anger."—*Set his eyes on him.* Implying intentness and severity of look.

10. *O full of all subtlety.* Or, fraud, guile, deceit.—*Mischief.* The Greek signifies "ease, or, lightness of doing;" hence a secondary meaning of levity, wickedness, and deception. Some conjecture a reference to his tricks of legerdemain and sleight of hand, but it is unnecessary.—*Thou child of the devil.* The same language was employed by our Lord in respect to the Jews. John viii. 44. See, also, 1 John iii. 8. But such a phrase does not endorse the belief of the existence of the devil, as a species of second

Lord? And now behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, 11 and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. Then the 12 deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.

Almighty, and predicate of Elymas a literal sonship to this malignant being; but it is popular language, fitted to convey, by a powerful illustration, Paul's abhorrence of the sorcerer, as if he was too bad a man to act simply under the guidance of his own heart, but was actuated by the reputed father of evil, the god of wickedness and sin.—*Of all righteousness.* Of all goodness. The heaping of epithet upon epithet, and description upon description, identifies the impassioned and imaginative Paul of the Epistles, who rushes with the stream of energetic thoughts, and overflows with vivid figures.—*Wilt thou not cease, &c.* He indignantly inquires whether he would not cease his impiety, and forbear perverting the right ways of the Lord, or thwarting the righteous purposes of Heaven in the conversion of the proconsul, his friends and people. A threat lurks under such a remonstrance; as much as to say, that if he did not abstain from further opposition, he would be visited with temporal judgments.

11. *The hand of the Lord is upon thee.* A Scripture phrase to express an infliction of punishment, or a chastisement of God.—*Not seeing the sun, &c.* He would suffer a temporary blindness, so severe as not to be able to distinguish the light of the sun.—*There fell on him a mist, &c.* As remarked by Bloomfield, “The supervention of the blindness is *graphically* described, by various stages of the affection. First, a *cloud*, as it were, came over the eyes, which soon increased to *darkness*, and that terminated in that *total eclipse*, in

which the sun is dark!”—*Went about, seeking some to lead him by the hand.* “This state of Elymas is imitatively represented in one of the cartoons of Raphael, in which his whole figure expresses the depth of *distress, concern, uncertainty, and confusion*; and, to use a word common in exhibiting this matchless piece of painting, *he is blind from head to foot.* In this manner the text authorized the painter to express the state of this miserable culprit.” The remarks made upon the case of Ananias and Sapphira, in justification of their punishment by a summary death, are essentially applicable to the present instance of judicial visitation. See chap. v., and notes thereon. It was better that one man should be made blind physically for a season, than that multitudes, by his unrebuked craft and guile, should be made spiritually blind to the great realities of the gospel. Every lower good should be freely sacrificed for a higher good.

12. *When he saw what was done, believed.* We witness the result of the punishment of Elymas, in establishing the faith of the proconsul. Such was the intended effect of the miracle, and in all likelihood its influence extended to other individuals. Some traditions have been preserved that the sorcerer himself was softened by his retribution, and became an eminent disciple, but they are destitute of credit. We have an instance, in Sergius Paulus, of the rich and powerful embracing Christianity, and the epithet applied to him, in ver. 7, was vindicated. If Christianity is needed by the poor to sustain them

13 Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John, departing from them, 14 returned to Jerusalem. But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue 15 on the Sabbath day, and sat down. And after the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, *Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of*

under their peculiar trials, it is equally requisite to fortify the powerful and prosperous against their besetting temptations. Whatever the external condition be, it is needed by every human soul, for its development and nutriment as a soul, as a spiritual intelligence holding immortal relations to God and mankind. Whether Paulus was baptized, and received as an avowed adherent to the Christian community, is not related, as no further history of his life is recorded.

13. *Paul and his company*, i. e. Barnabas and Mark, with perhaps other converts from Cyprus, as it was customary at times for delegations of the brethren to accompany the heralds of the cross in their expeditions from one country to another. Chap. ix. 30, xvii. 15. — *Loosed from Paphos*, i. e. sailed from this port in Cyprus. — *Perga in Pamphylia*. Pamphylia was one of the provinces of Asia Minor. See note on chap. ii. 10. A voyage from Cyprus to this country took them across the Cilician Sea. Perga, the capital of Pamphylia, stood upon the banks of the River Cestus, about 12 miles from its mouth, and was distinguished for what Cicero calls “the most ancient and sacred temple of the goddess Diana,” situated upon a neighboring mountain. — *John, departing from them*. Whether he turned back through fear of danger, or impatience under hardships, or the call of business at home, his reasons were not satisfactory to Paul, chap. xv. 38, who after-

wards refused his company, though he finally became reconciled to him, and coupled endearing epithets with his name. Col. iv. 10; Philemon 24; 2 Tim. iv. 11. — *Returned to Jerusalem*. Where his mother resided, and owned a house.

14. *Antioch in Pisidia*. Pisidia was a district of Asia Minor, bounded by Lycaonia on the north, Pamphylia on the south, Cilicia and Cappadocia on the east, and Asia on the west. Antioch is called Antioch in Pisidia, to distinguish it from the city of that name, ver. 1, in Syria, chap. xi. 26. It was, strictly speaking, in Phrygia, but belonged to Pisidia, and was situated about 90 miles north from Perga. — *On the Sabbath day*. Corresponding to our Saturday. Whatever part of the world they visited, they found Jewish synagogues, open to their worship and exhortations. — *Sat down*. They took the position, in the house, of teachers or exhorters, so that it would be expected that they should address the meeting at the proper time.

15. *After the reading of the law and the prophets*. See Luke iv. 17, and note thereon. The Pentateuch, or law of Moses, was divided into sections, one of which was read each Sabbath day, and the whole in the course of the year. Such a portion was also read from the prophets, in conjunction with the law, at each time, as would harmonize with it. It is the conjecture of Bengel, that, on this occasion, the reading lessons were Deut. i. and Is. i., as these were

exhortation for the people, say on. — Then Paul stood up, 16 and beckoning with his hand, said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience. The God of this people of Israel 17 chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with a high arm brought he them out of it. And about the time of forty years suffered he 18

read together, and Paul seemingly refers, in ver. 18, to Deut. i. 31. After the Scriptures were read, it was customary for the officers of the synagogue, or some stranger present, to expound and exhort — *The rulers of the synagogue*. There were three rulers to every synagogue, who regulated all its concerns, granted permission to preach and exhort, and, according to Lightfoot, possessed also a civil power, and constituted “the council of three,” which settled quarrels and rendered justice in pecuniary transactions. The other principal officer in a synagogue was the minister, or “the angel of the church,” Rev. ii. iii., who prayed, read, and exhorted. Luke iv. 20. — *Any word of exhortation, &c.* Paul and Barnabas were invited, as strangers, to address the people. The distance of Antioch from Jerusalem, the head-quarters of their faith, naturally rendered the congregation more interested in hearing those who had come from the holy city. — *Say on. Speak.*

16. *Beckoning with his hand.* As if to secure attention. Paul employed the opportunity to give a discourse upon the gospel. He first made a virtual acknowledgment of his faith in the law and the prophets, by a rapid sketch of the Jewish history, and then argued the completion of the ancient promises by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, whom he urged upon their faith and obedience as the true Messiah, who could not be neglected or disobeyed with impunity. This address bears some similarity to that of Stephen, except in being

shorter, and being brought to an unbroken conclusion, while Stephen was interrupted before the end. — *Men of Israel, and ye that fear God.* Here are the two classes described, of genuine Jews, and proselytes from among the Gentiles. Ver. 42, 43.

17. Paul commenced his address with a conciliating tone, agreeably to the rule of the ancient rhetoricians, that a public speaker should seek in his exordium, or introduction, to render his audience “attentive, docile, and well disposed.” — *Chose our fathers.* The children of Israel were selected from other nations for an important, special end; not for their own national aggrandizement, but for the good of the whole family of man. — *Exalted the people, &c.* Notwithstanding the bondage of Egypt, the Israelites multiplied from a single family into a great nation, and when they were redeemed from slavery they were numbered by myriads. Ex. xii. 37. — *With a high arm.* With an uplifted or outstretched arm, expressive of a powerful manifestation of divine aid. Comp. Ex. vii. — xv.; Deut. xxvi. 8. The miracles in Egypt, and the passage of the Red Sea, justified the phrases, “with a strong hand,” “with a high arm.”

18. *About the time of forty years.* The Hebrews spent this time in journeying the short distance from Egypt to Canaan through the deserts of Arabia. Ex. xvi. 35; Deut. viii. 2, 3. The old generation that was sensualized by its bondage in Egypt, and proximity to idolatry, must pass away, and a new race come upon the stage, better prepared to carry out

19. their manners in the wilderness. And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Chanaan, he divided their land to 20 them by lot. And after that, he gave *unto them* judges, about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the

the purposes of Heaven in the establishment of a pure worship on earth — the germ of a boundless growth of true faith through all ages and all nations. — *Suffered he their manners.* The best critics read, “Nourished, or bore, or fed them as a nurse;” changing the word in the original into another slightly different in form, which is found in good authorities. The Israelites were guided and guarded by a favoring Providence in their journeyings. Their discipline was ordered for their best good, and every visitation carried healing and life in its train. When reduced to extremity, they called upon the God of their fathers, and they ever found that his ear was not heavy that it could not hear, nor his arm shortened that it could not save. Ex. xix. 4; Num. xi. 12; Deut. i. 31; Is. xlvi. 4.

19. *Destroyed seven nations*, i. e. the Canaanites, Hittites, Gergashites, Amorites, Hivites, Perizzites, and Jebusites. Deut. vii. 1; Josh. iii. 10. These tribes were not utterly extirpated, but their national existence was essentially broken. — *He divided their land to them by lot.* Or, he allotted, or assigned them the land. Josh. xiv. xv. Bishop Watson, in his *Apology for the Bible*, remarks that, “As to the Canaanites, it is needless to enter into any proof of the depraved state of their morals; they were a wicked people in the time of Abraham, and they, even then, were devoted to destruction by God; but their iniquity was not then full. In the time of Moses, they were idolaters, sacrificers of their own crying or smiling infants; devourers of human flesh; addicted

to unnatural lust; immersed in the filthiness of all manner of vice. Now, I think, it will be impossible to prove, that it was a proceeding contrary to God’s moral justice to exterminate so wicked a people. He made the Israelites the executors of his vengeance; and, in doing this, he gave such an evident and terrible proof of his abomination of vice, as could not fail to strike the surrounding nations with astonishment and terror; and to impress on the minds of the Israelites what they were to expect, if they followed the example of the nations whom he commanded them to cut off. ‘Ye shall not commit any of these abominations, that the land spew not you out also, as it spewed out the nations that were before you.’ How strong and descriptive this language! The vices of the inhabitants were so abominable, that the very land was sick of them, and forced to vomit them forth, as the stomach disgorges a deadly poison!” The removal of the idolatrous tribes of Canaan, and the introduction of a new people, charged with a great mission for the good of mankind, and imbosoming in their sacred ritual the purest ideas of God, were events as justifiable as any judgments or dispensations that occur in the administration of the divine government; by which life is freely sacrificed for the promotion of great principles, a lower good is made to yield to a higher good, sin is punished, and virtue is rewarded.

20. *He gave unto them judges.* Or, “rulers;” for this term is more comprehensive than that used in the received version. “It may be observed,” to use the language of Milman,

prophet. And afterward they desired a king: and God gave <sup>21</sup> unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years. And when he had removed him, <sup>22</sup>

“that, although these men were, in Hebrew phraseology, said to be raised up by the Lord, that is, inspired with the noble design, and endowed with ability, to deliver their country, yet all their particular actions are nowhere attributed to divine direction.”

— *About the space of four hundred and fifty years, &c.* Here a discrepancy occurs between Paul and 1 Kings vi. 1, which has been called “the cross of chronologists.” For if we add to the 450 years, which are here assigned to the judges, the 17 years of Joshua, the 40 of Samuel and Saul, the 40 of David, and the 3 of Solomon before the temple was commenced, we have in all about 590 years, instead of the 480 of 1 Kings vi. 1, from the exodus out of Egypt to the fourth year of Solomon. It is thought, therefore, that the period under the judges must be miscalculated by one or the other writer. Paul appears to have used the current computations of his day; for Josephus says that “Solomon was now in the fourth year of his reign, when he began his mighty work, (the erection of the temple;) 592 years from the Israelites’ coming out of Egypt; 1020 years from Abraham’s coming out of Mesopotamia into the land of Canaan; 1440 from the deluge; and from the creation of the world, 3102.” Taking out of the 592 years of Josephus, 40 years in the wilderness, and the periods of Joshua, Samuel, Saul, and Solomon, reckoned above, and we have 452, about the same period as that assigned by Paul for the time of the judges. It may be impossible now to reconcile the text with the statement in 1 Kings vi. 1; but it should be borne in mind, that the subject of ancient chronology is involved throughout

in much obscurity; that as numbers were expressed by letters, there was much room for mistakes in transcribing; and that Paul agrees, in his chronology, with Josephus, and the prevalent computations of the Jews.

21. *They desired a king.* 1 Sam. viii. 5; Deut. xvii. 14, 15. It seems not to have been originally intended that the Hebrew government should become a monarchy; but it was necessary in this, as in another case, to yield to the hardness of the hearts of the people, Mat. xix. 8, to their ambition and vanity.—*Saul, the son of Cis.* Or, Kish. 1 Sam. ix. 1.—*By the space of forty years.* Here is also a difficulty in chronology. For the reign of Saul alone was probably but about twenty years, and to this must be added that of Samuel’s government, to make up the period of forty years, which is doubtless the true explanation; for Josephus also speaks of the reign of Saul as extending over forty years, including a portion of the life of Samuel.

22. *Removed him.* The cause is related in 1 Sam. xv. He disobeyed the commands of God by sparing the Amalekites. He distrusted God, and consulted a sorceress. 1 Sam. xxviii. The Philistines conquered him in battle, and he was driven by despair to commit suicide. 1 Sam. xxxi.—*Raised up unto them David.* 1 Sam. xvi. From a shepherd boy, he became the greatest monarch of the age.—*He gave testimony.* Comp. 1 Sam. xiii. 14, with Ps. lxxxix. 20.

— *I have found David, a man after mine own heart, &c.* The high eulogy which is here pronounced upon David’s character, has been often misunderstood. Infidelity has seized hold of the crimes of David to slander the cause of religion. It is im-

he raised up unto them David to be their king : to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the *son* of Jesse, a

portant to keep in mind the current remark of the commentators, that the praise bestowed upon him was rather for his public than his private conduct, if such a distinction can be made ; that he was a man after God's own heart, rather as David the king than as David the man. For, as a sovereign, he was faithful in upholding the worship of God, in checking idolatry, and in the general maintenance of the laws of Jehovah. 1 Kings xiv. 8, 9, xv. 3, 5. He should be judged, too, by the moral standard of his day, not by Christian rules. The following quaint, but beautiful, thoughts may, however, still further show that, although he sinned, he repented, and ever exhibited a heaven-seeking aspiration. Edward Irving writes thus of David : "The force of his character was vast, and the scope of his life was immense. His harp was full-stringed, and every angel of joy and of sorrow swept over the chords as he passed ; but the melody always breathed of heaven. And such oceans of affection lay within his breast as could not always slumber in their calmness. For the hearts of a hundred men strove and struggled together within the narrow continent of his single heart. And will the scornful men have no sympathy for one so conditioned, but scorn him because he ruled not with constant quietness the unruly host of divers natures which dwelt within his single soul ? Of self-command surely he will not be held deficient, who endured Saul's javelin to be so often launched at him, while the people without were willing to hail him king ; who endured all bodily hardships and taunts of his enemies when revenge was in his hand, and ruled his desperate band like a company of saints, and restrained them from their country's

injury. But that he should not be able to enact all characters without a fault, — the simple shepherd, the conquering hero, and the romantic lover ; the perfect friend, the innocent outlaw, and the royal monarch ; the poet, the prophet, and the regenerator of the church ; and withal the man, the man of vast soul, who played not these parts by turn, but was the original of them all, and wholly present in them all, — O ! that he should have fulfilled this high-priesthood of humanity, this universal ministry of manhood, without an error, were more than human. With the defence of his backslidings, which he hath himself more keenly scrutinized, more clearly discerned against, and more bitterly lamented, than any of his censors, we do not charge ourselves ; but if, when of these acts he became convinced, he be found less true to God and to righteousness, indisposed to repentance, and sorrow, and anguish, exculpatory of himself, stout-hearted in his courses, a formalist in his penitence, or in any way less worthy of a spiritual man in those than in the rest of his infinite moods, — then, verily, strike him from the canon, and let his Psalms become monkish legends, or what you please. But if these penitential Psalms discover the soul's deepest hell of agony, and lay bare the iron ribs of misery, whereon the very heart dissolveth ; and if they, expressing the same in words, melt the soul that conceiveth, and bow the head that uttereth them, then, we say, let us keep these records of the psalmist's grief and despondency as the most precious of his utterances, and sure to be needed in the case of every man who essayeth to live a spiritual life." The following words, hardly sentences, are from Carlyle. "David, the Hebrew

man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will. Of this 23 man's seed hath God, according to his promise, raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus: when John had first preached, before his 24 coming, the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Who think ye that I 25 am? I am not *he*. But behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of his feet I am not worthy to loose. Men and 26 brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation

king, had fallen into sins enough; blackest crimes; there was no want of sins. And thereupon the unbelievers sneer and ask, Is this your man according to God's heart? The sneer, I must say, seems to me but a shallow one. What are faults, what are the outward details of a life, if the inner secret of it, the remorse, temptations, true, often-baffled, never-ended struggle of it, be forgotten? 'It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.' Of all acts, is not, for a man, *repentance* the most divine? The deadliest sin, I say, were that same supercilious consciousness of no sin; — that is death; the heart so conscious is divorced from sincerity, humility, and fact; is dead: it is 'pure' as dead, dry sand is pure. David's life and history, as written for us in those Psalms of his, I consider to be the truest emblem ever given of a man's moral progress and warfare here below. All earnest souls will ever discern in it the faithful struggle of an earnest human soul towards what is good and best. Struggle often baffled, sore baffled, down as into entire wreck; yet a struggle never-ended; ever, with tears, repentance, true, unconquerable purpose, begun anew. Poor human nature! Is not a man's walking, in truth, always that? 'a succession of falls.' Man can do no other. In this wild element of a life, he has to struggle onwards; now fallen, deep-abased; and ever, with tears, re-

pentance, with bleeding heart, he has to rise again, struggle again still onwards. That his struggle be a faithful, unconquerable one: that is the question of questions."

23. *Of this man's seed, &c.* Agreeably to the prediction, Is. xi. 1-10: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots," &c. The whole tenor of prophecy was, that the Messiah would be the son of David. — *Raised unto Israel.* Unto Israel first, but not exclusively. Griesbach reads "brought," instead of "raised." — *A Saviour, Jesus.* See note on Mat. i. 21.

24, 25. *When John had first preached, before his coming*, i. e. before the mission of Jesus, John had already preached the baptism of repentance, or proclaimed a moral reformation of the people, of which baptism was the sign and seal. Mat. iii.; Mark i. — *As John fulfilled his course.* Or, better, "while John was fulfilling his course;" a metaphor taken from the ancient games of running in the stadium. — *I am not he, &c.* Luke iii. 16; John i. 20. The humility and disinterestedness of these words give us an impressive idea of the elevated virtue and holy integrity of the Baptist. Paul wisely introduced the testimony of John, because the people entertained a great reverence for him, believing him to be a true prophet.

26. *Men and brethren*, i. e. without

27 sent. For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath day, they have fulfilled *them* in condemning 28 *him*. And though they found no cause of death in *him*, yet 29 desired they Pilate that he should be slain. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took *him* down from

the idiom, "brethren." — *Children of the stock, &c.*, i. e. Jews. — *Whosoever among you searcth God*, i. e. proselytes of the Gentiles. It has been observed that Paul does not, at this time, declare the accession of the Gentiles to the privileges of the Messiah, since it would only excite their prejudices before the truth could gain a foothold in their minds. — *The word of this salvation is sent*. Or, the message or doctrine of this salvation; so denominated because, by it, a sinful world would be redeemed from its guilt and miseries, and a way of reconciliation and peace with God opened to the returning penitent.

27. *They that dwell at Jerusalem, &c.* The crime of rejecting the Messiah, and putting him to death, particularly rested upon the inhabitants and rulers of the holy city. Paul hints that the Jews of Antioch were as yet innocent, and it behoved them to beware implicating themselves in the iniquity of their countrymen. — *Knew him not, &c.*, i. e. did not recognize or acknowledge him as the Messiah. This was the only mitigation of their offence. Luke xxiii. 34. They were, however, answerable for their ignorance, for if they had not chosen darkness, they might have seen the true light. Obstinacy, prejudice, suppression of their real convictions, had plunged them into voluntary night. — *Prophets which are read every Sabbath day*. A portion of the prophets was read every week, in connexion with the regular lesson in the law. See note on ver. 15. But although the proph-

ecies were read, they were not understood — a fact true to this day, so far as the Jews are concerned. If any thing is more important than the reading of the word of God, it is that it should be understood. — *They have fulfilled, &c.* The Jews unwittingly fulfilled the old predictions by their condemnation of their Messiah; for it had been intimated that he would be "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." Luke xxiv. 44-46; Is. liii. 3.

28. *Though they found no cause of death*, i. e. no just cause. This circumstance gave the darkest hue of guilt to their conduct. They put an innocent being to the most dreadful death. Although they changed the ground of accusation, first charging him with blasphemy, a religious, and then with sedition, a political, offence; summoned false witnesses; adjured the prisoner himself, and used every art which malice could devise, or tyranny could execute; yet his betrayer, judges, executioners, and the spectators, all agreed, with singular unanimity, that he died a death of fearful injustice. Mat. xxvii. 4; Luke xxiii. 14, 15, 22, 27, 47, 48.

29. *Fulfilled all*. See Luke xxiv. 26, 27; John xix. 30. — *They took him down, &c.*, i. e. he was taken down; or those who put him to death were instrumental of his being taken down, or of all the consequences which followed his death; Luke xxiii. 53; though Joseph and Nicodemus, with their friends, not the rulers and soldiers, actually performed the fu-

the tree, and laid *him* in a sepulchre. But God raised him from the dead: and he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people. And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, *now* no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Wherefore he saith also in another *psalm*, Thou shalt not suffer thy Holy One to see corruption. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: but he, whom

neral rites. — *The tree.* The cross.

30, 31. *But God raised him, &c.* But he met with different treatment from God, who restored him to life, and vindicated his cause. The miracle of the resurrection is always attributed directly to the agency of God. — *Seen many days, &c.* Forty days. The strongest possible evidence of the reality of his return to life was afforded by his being seen by many and few, in different places, during a considerable period, performing various actions, and uttering lessons such as belonged only to him to speak and do; and, finally, by his disappearance into the heavens, in open day, from his gazing disciples. Chap. i. 1–11; x. 41.

32, 33. *Glad tidings, how that the promise.* It was a matter of joy to the Jews that the Messiah had come, for they regarded him as the deliverer of their nation, and every heart beat with impatience for the establishment of his kingdom. — *Raised up Jesus again.* Or, simply, “raising up,” or appointing Jesus as the Messiah. Not the resurrection, but the original ordination of Jesus as the Messiah, is here described. — *In the second psalm.* Ps. ii. 7. Griesbach

and many other critics read, “the first psalm;” because the first psalm was formerly reckoned by the Jews as a preface, and the second stood as the first; or the first two psalms were reckoned as one, and the passage here quoted was thus included in the first. — *Thou art my son, &c.* Spoken of the relation between God and the Messiah, who, as the vicegerent of God, is figuratively called his Son, and whom, therefore, he is figuratively said to beget, i. e. to appoint, to declare as a king. Heb. i. 5, v. 5.

34–37. *As concerning that he raised him up from the dead.* Here is reference to the resurrection. Ver. 30. — *No more to return to corruption.* The body of Christ had not been in corruption at all, as it was raised before decomposition; but this expression is used with relation to dying again, and being buried. Christ had been raised to an immortal life.

— *I will give you the sure mercies of David.* See Is. lv. 3. What is here meant is, the promise that the line of David should be continued on the throne forever, which was spiritually fulfilled in the everlasting kingdom of Christ. The ratification of this covenant was sealed by the resur-

**38** God raised again, saw no corruption. Be it known unto you therefore, men *and* brethren, that through this man is preached **39** unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by

rection of our Lord from the dead; for had he not been raised up, the promise would have been broken.—*In another psalm.* Ps. xvi. 10. See an explanation of this and the following sentences in chap. ii. 25–34, and the notes theron. God did not suffer the lineage of David to fail, but preserved his successors to the time of Jesus, raised him up as the eternal King of Israel, and thus made sure to him the mercies which he had promised of old. This course of arguing was well adapted to produce a vivid impression upon the Jews, and to convince them of the reality of Christ's advent, and the sinfulness of opposing his claims.—*Served his own generation.* Or, better, “served or performed the will of God in his age or day;” which he did by the energy with which he maintained the worship of God, and suppressed the idolatrous tendencies of his people.—*Fell on sleep.* Or, slept; or, died.—*Was laid unto his fathers.* An allusion to the manner of burying in the East, by which a whole family or lineage were successively buried in the same tomb or catacomb, until it was filled with dead bodies.—*Saw no corruption.* The case of Jesus was to be distinguished from other individuals who had been raised from the dead, as Lazarus, and the widow's son of Nain; for they died again, and returned to corruption, but he rose to the spiritual world, and entered within the veil, where decay and death cannot come. The prophecies, and the preaching of John the Baptist, all bore united and irresistible testimony to his Messiahship, and the duty of belief and obedience.

**38, 39. Men and brethren.** Brethren.—*Is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.* Luke xxiv. 47. Men are sinners. They are all sick with a moral disease. The gospel is the remedy, and Christ the Physician. For he encourages men to repent by the assurance of pardon. He reveals the rich mercy of God to every returning sinner. He cherishes the holy desire of reconciliation and peace, breaks not the bruised reed of a penitential emotion, nor quenches the smoking flax of a heaven-lifted aspiration ready to burst into a pure flame. He treats men as they are, meets them on their own level, and shows them the awful nature and consequences of their transgressions; but bids them, nevertheless, hope, with full assurance in God, as a Father, ready to help them escape the toils and snares of sin, merciful to forgive, and plenteous in redemption. Here lies the secret of the power and salvation of the gospel. It shows us that God loves us, loves us even in our sins, cannot consent that we should perish, pleads with us in a voice of parental tenderness, but of warning; and has, in giving us his Son to live and die for us, demonstrated more powerfully than words could do, that, if we would not be dead to all that is good, and true, and fair, and quench the great immortal hope of our being, we must cast away every sin, and turn to him and live.—*All that believe are justified from all things, &c.* We here alight, for the first time, on the Pauline idea of **JUSTIFICATION**, the grand key to the epistles, the central principle of this apostle's faith, and the characteristic of his whole religious system. He

the law of Moses. Beware therefore, lest that come upon you 40. which is spoken of in the prophets; Behold, ye despisers, and 41. wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.

contrasted here, as he did through several of his epistles, the gospel with the law of Moses. The law was a rigid master; it exacted the utmost penalty for every sin. It was sternly just. But it dealt with externals; it walked by sight. It prescribed this offering, or that sacrifice, for the wrong-doer, and the heart might still be far away from true penitence, though the outward act was performed to a punctilio. The law, then, could not justify a sinner. It was not to be expected, for that was not its leading aim. It was a ritual, a schoolmaster, a disciplinarian, to clear the way for higher truth, and a holier service. A man might, as the Pharisees did, perform every item of legal requirement, so far as outward exercises were concerned, and yet be a very sepulchre, as they were, of moral rottenness and death. But the gospel, according to Paul, emphasized *faith*, a moral, spiritual sentiment of the heart, as alone entitling man to be justified, or treated as just by God. He had come under a new and advanced teacher, Christ, who had to do with the heart, whose eye pierced the motives of conduct, and judged the character like the all-seeing God. The law was "weak," as the apostle elsewhere says; it did not appeal, like the message of the Crucified One, to the heart. It did not justify the sinner, because it could not so powerfully help him to repent of his sins, and fulfil the single condition of justification, *viz.*, REPENTANCE AND REFORMATION. If a Jew did, by any means, repent, however, he was pardoned as much as a Christian is

now. See Ezek. xviii. xxxiii. But faith, full, undoubting confidence in Christ, justifies the transgressor, because it works a moral revolution in his character, assures him of the goodness of God, and convinces him that, if he still suffers some of the consequences of his sins, even after repentance, yet that God has cancelled others, and will treat and love him as his child, as if he had never strayed, and will open to him the whole heaven of love and blessedness, and bid the angels rejoice over his recovery. Rom. viii. 1.

40, 41. *Beware therefore, &c.* Probably Luke gives only the leading ideas of Paul's address, not the whole, word for word. These two verses contain the sum of the whole matter, the conclusion from all the foregoing reasoning, *viz.*, the importance of heeding the heaven sent Teacher, and the ruin of disobedience.—*In the prophets.* The twelve minor prophets, from Hosea to Malachi, were reckoned by the Jews as one book, and hence the quotation is said to be taken from the prophets. See Hab. i. 5.—*Behold, ye despisers, &c.* The warning in Habakkuk was directed to the Jews, in view of the approaching destruction of their nation by the Chaldeans; and the prediction was fulfilled in the Babylonish captivity. Paul quotes this passage as highly appropriate to the circumstances of his hearers, who would witness, in their day, a retribution of the most terrible kind inflicted by the Romans upon the Jewish nation.—*A work which you shall in no wise believe, &c.* It was so incredible that their city and temple could be de-

42 And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them 43 the next Sabbath. Now, when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas; who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in 44 the grace of God. And the next Sabbath day came almost the 45 whole city together to hear the word of God. — But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting

stroyed, that the strongest assertions of Christ and his apostles produced no effect upon the people, but they madly rushed on, in their career to ruin, with an irresistible momentum. As a matter of history, it is well known that all the disciples of Jesus, giving heed to his warnings, escaped the destruction which overtook the immense mass of their countrymen.

42. *The Jews — the Gentiles.* These words are expunged from the text by Griesbach and other trustworthy critics, and the verse reads thus: “And when they, i. e. the apostles, were gone out, the people besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath,” i. e. the Jewish Sabbath, corresponding to our Saturday. The address of Paul had left so deep and favorable an impression, that they wished to hear further of the matter. The text of the passage, in the original, is, however, so uncertain, that some commentators are disposed to cancel the whole as a gloss which has crept in from the margin; but that conjecture is unauthorized.

43. *When the congregation was broken up.* Literally, and better, as avoiding the expression of any idea of violence, “when the synagogue was dissolved.” — *The Jews and religious proselytes.* Here, again, as in ver. 16, the two classes are spoken of, viz., Hebrews and Gentile proselytes. — *Persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.* Or, exhorted

them to remain faithful to their belief in the gospel, which fully revealed the grace or favor of God, his mercy to the returning sinner, and his interest in the Gentiles. The apostle here struck upon a very practical point, the necessity of continuing in the right way, as well as of entering into it at first. Multitudes have a period of interest in religion, yet, alas! do not persevere in the use of means and a steady cultivation of the Christian character; but lose their first love, backslide, and their last state is worse than the first, because they are with more difficulty renewed in the temper of their minds. “If ye continue in my word,” said our Master, “then are ye my disciples indeed.” John viii. 31; Acts xiv. 22.

44, 45. *The next Sabbath day.* See ver. 42, where the word “next” is a different one in the original from that used in this verse, though the sense is essentially the same. — *Almost the whole city.* For it was not a very large place. Both Jews and Gentiles gathered to the same assembly. — *When the Jews saw, &c.* It excited their envy to see Gentiles flocking to the apostles, and treated by them as on terms of equality with the chosen people, and admitted to the privilege of passing their judgment upon the claims of the Messiah. The same envy afterwards broke out, and it constituted, all through the apostolic age, one of the greatest obstacles to the progress of truth among

and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and 46 said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles: for so hath the Lord commanded us, *saying*, I have set thee 47 to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard 48 this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as

the Jews. — *Contradicting and blaspheming.* They were not content to use the weapons of reason and truth, but showed the weakness of their cause by resorting to abuse and impiety — a practice which has found too many counterparts among controversialists of every age. Chap. xvii. 5.

46, 47. *Waxed bold, and said.* Or, using great freedom of speech, they said. See chap. iv. 13. So far from being daunted by the furious opposition which beat upon them, they rose with the rising storm, and still showed themselves to be the fearless servants of the Great Master. — *That the word of God should first have been spoken to you.* Mat. x. 5, 6; Rom. x. 19–21; Acts xxii. 21. The Jews, as the recipients and pupils of the earlier dispensation, were entitled to have the first offer of the gospel. — *Judge yourselves unworthy.* This is irony. They did not judge themselves unworthy, but they behaved as if they did; they virtually declared, by their conduct, that they were not worthy to receive so blessed a boon as the gift of a Messiah, and the promise of everlasting life. — *Lo! we turn to the Gentiles.* The moral courage, and grandeur of sentiment, contained in these words, can be but feebly understood by us now, after that great controversy between Jewish bigotry and gospel liberty has passed away; but when we consider the original education of Paul, as one of the straitest of the straitest

sect, and the violent prejudices, not only of his enemies, but even of his Christian converts and companions, against the admission of the Gentiles to any equality of Christian privileges with the Jews, we shall feel that the apostle spoke as no ordinary hero. — *The Lord commanded us, &c.* Paul fortified his position by the bulwark of Scripture. He professed to be guided by the express will of God. He was acting in conformity to the great original plan of the Almighty. — *I have set thee to be, &c.* Refer to Is. xlix. 6. It is evident, by reference to the passage, that the Gentiles were included in the promised blessings of a new order of things, under the expected Deliverer. The enlarged spirit of the prophets rebuked the contracted temper of that generation.

48. *They were glad, and glorified the word, &c.* The contrast between the narrowness of the Jews and the generous sentiments of Paul was too plain to be overlooked. The Gentiles glorified or extolled the passage of Scripture which had been quoted by the apostle, for it was an unanswerable argument against the Jews. *As many as were ordained, &c.* This rendering is bad, and the inferences often drawn from it totally groundless and presumptuous. The true version is, “As many as were disposed, bent on, or inclined to, eternal life, believed.” “Eternal life” is used for the gospel itself, of which it is the vital doctrine, and the sublime

49 many as were ordained to eternal life, believed. And the word

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promise. The readiness of the Gentiles to welcome the gospel, is compared with the obstinacy and envy of the Jews in ver. 46. The one party put it from them, the other were glad to receive it; the one judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life, the other glorified the word which contained so vast a boon, and were disposed to seek and secure it. But if the doctrine of Paul was, that God had foreordained and decreed a part of mankind to salvation, and passed by the rest, and the larger part, and "ordained them," to use the language of the Westminster Assembly, "to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice," then it would hardly have been a matter of gladness with the Gentiles, for it was a worse exclusiveness than Jewish nationality and pride. Some individuals of their own number might be cut off from the catalogue of mercy. Then the Jews, who resisted the apostles, were not responsible for their conduct; for they were doing precisely what God had decreed, from the foundation of the world, they should do; and there was no reason why Paul and Barnabas should desert the Jews, and resort to the Gentiles; for some of both classes were ordained according to this monstrous theory, and some were not; and it mattered not in which field they worked, if, indeed, all their labors were not superfluous. And if the Jews and the Gentiles were not free agents, why did the apostles exhort and warn them, ver. 38-41, as if they were at liberty to choose their own way? If they were already decreed, some to certain woe, and others to eternal salvation, exclusively of all efforts of their own, then preaching to them was a mockery; and every encouragement was only to tantalize them

with hopes, from which a portion were forever debarred. On the contrary, Paul treated both the Jews who rejected, and the Gentiles who welcomed, the truth, as endowed with freedom of choice, and amenable for their actions; and he praised the one, and condemned the other. There is an eternal counsel of God, but it is perfectly consistent with the power of choice on the part of every moral agent. Bloomfield, in speaking of this passage, says, that "so far from favoring the system of *absolute election*, the words rather support the *opposite* doctrine, namely, that God, while

"—— binding Nature flat in Fate,  
Left free the human will!"

And Horne, in his Introduction, remarks, that "if the verse had been translated according to the proper meaning of the original, it would have run thus: 'As many as were disposed for eternal life, believed.' Which rendering is not only faithful to the original, but also to the context and scope of the sacred historian, who is relating the effects, or consequences, of the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles." In the language of Rosenmuller, "Paul used the words of common life, which must not be used to cover philosophical and metaphysical notions. Nothing is here intended respecting absolute decrees." So Newcome, in harmony with the Trinitarian writers above quoted, says, "*As many* of the Gentiles *believed* as were inwardly *disposed* to receive the doctrine of everlasting life; as had an orderly and well-prepared mind for that purpose; as had disposed themselves to it."

49. *The word of the Lord.* Or, the Christian religion.—*All the region*, i. e. in Pisidia and the adjoining provinces.

of the Lord was published throughout all the region. — But 50 the Jews stirred up the devout and honorable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts. But they shook 51 off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost. 52

50. *The devout and honorable women.* Neither of the epithets here used expresses any thing in relation to their personal character; for it would have been singular indeed, if, in that case, they would have embarked in a persecution of the apostles. *Devout* merely refers to their being proselytes, and *honorable* to their high rank. They prevailed upon their influential Gentile relatives and friends, some of whom were in the government, to banish the holy missionaries of the cross. We often find woman, in the New Testament, standing on the Master's side; but seldom, as here, in the band of his enemies. — *Coasts.* Borders, boundaries.

51. *Shook off the dust.* Chap. xviii. 6; Mat. x. 14. As an emblem of their disapprobation, and of warning to the place, as if they regarded it as a heathen city. No fires of revenge burned in the breasts of these good men, but they turned away in pity, in a sorrowful indignation, from a field so promising at first, in which they hoped to have planted many a living seed of truth. It is remarkable and beautiful, as has been observed hereupon, that the writings of the evangelists and apostles are always free from expressions of resentment. In the narrative of the persecution and death of Jesus, and the opposition of the Jews to his apostles, there is no reproachful language used, but facts are simply stated, and left to speak for themselves. No history in the world bears such luminous evidences of mercy, love, good-will to all men,

even to the evil and the unthankful. — *Iconium.* See notes on chap. xiv. 1, 6.

52. *The disciples,* i. e. of Antioch. — *With joy, and with the Holy Ghost.* Such were the fruits of the apostles' labors. Joy, and a holy and powerful spiritual influence, followed in their train. Religion, in modern times, is often so much allied with false philosophy and dark and degrading human dogmas, that she wears a face very unlike her radiant, cheerful, joyful expression in the apostolic age. She is now, too frequently, a widow dressed in melancholy mourning weeds, not a celestial queen of divine beauty and grace, a vision of heaven, whose look is a benediction. Such she was, when James bled and Paul preached. The truths, that God is our Father, and man our brother, and Jesus our Saviour, and heaven our home, ought surely, if any thing in heaven or on earth can, to give us joy and peace. It is a Christian duty to be happy. He but poorly recommends his faith, or makes his light shine, who carries about only a sullen or sanctimonious visage, not the beaming cheerfulness of a happy, reconciled heart. The gospel is a message of good news; and as we brighten up with glad expressions of voice, look, and gesture, at receiving good tidings from our friends, — an absent father or brother, — so ought we to rejoice, and again rejoice, in the intelligence from our unseen Father, in the news from the higher, heavenly world. If we would interest the young in religion, we must show them, in our daily life, the

## CHAPTER XIV.

*The Travels and Labors of Paul and Barnabas in Asia Minor.*

AND it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude, both of the Jews, and also of the Greeks, believed. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil-affected against the brethren. Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be

peace, joy, and delight, with which it fills every devout bosom.

“Joy to those that love the Lord !”  
Saith the sure, eternal word.  
Not of earth the joy it brings,  
Tempered in celestial springs :  
“Tis the joy of pardoned sin  
When we feel ‘tis well within ;  
“Tis the joy that fills the breast  
When the passions sink to rest.”

## CHAPTER XIV.

1. *Iconium.* Chap. xiii. 51. This was the capital of Lycaonia, though assigned by some authors to Pisidia or Phrygia, situated upon the Lake Trogilis, about 120 miles from the Mediterranean Sea. See note on ver. 6. It is in a delicious climate, imbosomed amidst lofty mountains, and abounding with gardens and meadows. It has been a place of considerable distinction in history, and capital of the country of Caramania. Though surrounded by walls and towers, and adorned with edifices of magnificence, it has fallen very much into ruins, and its inhabitants live in that squalid wretchedness common in Turkish cities. Its present name is *Cogni*, or *Cornieh*, or *Koniah*. — *So spake*, i. e. with such power. — *Greeks.* The Gentile proselytes.

2. *Gentiles*, i. e. those not Jews — proselytes, and perhaps heathen. — *Made their minds evil-affected.* Or, imbibited ; incensed them against the *brethren*, or disciples of Christ.

This verse should be included in parentheses.

3. *Therefore.* Or, “however,” or, “accordingly.” It is a mere particle of transition, not of conclusion from premises. As a great multitude believed, ver. 1, *so* they continued a long time, and preached with great freedom. — *Lord*, i. e. God. — *Gave testimony unto the word of his grace*, i. e. confirmed by miracles, wrought by the apostles, the gracious revelation of mercy and truth by his Son. The paramount object of the miracles in the New Testament was to establish the divine authority of Jesus and his apostles. It is true that they were usually, though not always, — witness the destruction of the swine, the blindness of Elymas, and the death of Ananias and Sapphira, — for the relief of suffering ; but this was their incidental, not their essential, characteristic. Their chief attribute of benevolence consisted, not in their bringing relief to here and there an individual at the time, but in being wrought for the establishment of that religion which would cure the ills of time and enhance the joys of eternity ; save the sinner from his guilt and woe, and spread love and peace through millions of hearts. The miracles are the effulgent signatures of God’s interposing mercy for the good of more than flesh and blood — for the sake of the undying soul.

done by their hands. But the multitude of the city was divided : 4 and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles. And 5 when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews, with their rulers, to use *them* despitefully, and to stone them, they were ware of *it*, and fled unto Lystra and 6 Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about : and there they preached the gospel. 7

And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, 8 being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked. The same heard Paul speak : who steadfastly beholding him, 9 and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud 10 voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked.

4, 5. *Was divided.* Literally, in the original, "A schism was made." — *Held with.* Or, "Took the side of," &c. — *The apostles.* Both Paul and Barnabas are called apostles, though the title, in its strict sense, is more applicable to the former. — *Was an assault made.* Not actually made, but contemplated ; for they became aware of it, and escaped. Ver. 6. The majority of the city, probably, took part against the advocates of truth. But the unpopularity of a cause is no sign of its error. Both Jews and *Gentiles* combined in this unholy work, though the gospel was a dispensation of mercy to the latter as much as to the former. — *To stone them.* The penalty of blasphemy. Deut. xiii. 10 ; Acts vii. 57 — 59.

6. *Fled into Lystra.* Mat. x. 23. This place is situated in the south part of Lycaonia. It is referred to, by Pliny, as belonging to the province stated in the text ; but Ptolemy assigns it to Isauria. The fact is, that the boundaries of these districts were indeterminate, and the same cities were variously appropriated. Lystra was distinguished as the native town of Timothy. Chap. xvi. 1. It is now called *Latik.* — *Derbe.* This place was at a short distance from Lystra, as is supposed, though little is known about the precise lo-

cation of either city. — *Lycaonia* was an inland province of Asia Minor, bounded by Cappadocia, Phrygia, Pisidia, Cilicia, and Isauria. Strabo, the geographer, says, while speaking of this region, "Thence are the Lycaonian hills, plain, cold, naked, and pastures for wild asses. About these places stands Iconium, a town built in a better soil." And Pliny also mentions, "that there was granted a tetrarchy out of Lycaonia, on that side which borders on Galatia, consisting of fourteen cities ; the most famous of which is Iconium."

8. *There sat.* "Meant, it should seem, to express, *graphically*, the condition of this poor wretch, *who had never walked.*" He was, probably, a beggar, sitting in some public place to solicit alms, and, therefore, known to many. — *A cripple.* Which, according to the derivation of the word from *creep*, signifies one who could not walk upright. The greatness and certainty of his cure were enhanced by its contrast with his former helpless state.

9. *Heard Paul speak, &c.* Perhaps he related the miracles and cures which had been wrought, ver. 3, in other places, as well as discoursed in general of the gospel. — *Had faith to be healed.* "The divine in the appearance and discourse

11 —— And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lift up their voices, saying, in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are 12 come down to us in the likeness of men. And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief

of Paul, deeply impressed him, and caused him to look up with confidence, as if he expected a cure from him." Mat. xv. 28; Luke vii. 50; Acts iii. 6, 8.

11. *In the speech of Lycaonia.* What this was, is not known, but it has been conjectured to be an idiom of the Greek, corrupted by provincialisms. Paul and Barnabas, however, as it appears, did not understand it, else they would have earlier repressed the enthusiasm of the people. Hence it has been inferred, that they did not possess the gift of tongues. — *The gods are come down to us, &c.* Chap. xxviii. 6. This was in accordance with the popular faith of the heathen world. It was believed that the gods, or divinities of their mythology, came down from heaven to earth, and, assuming the disguise of a human form, travelled from place to place, to inspect the affairs of mankind. Many narratives of this kind are given both in prose and poetry. Homer says,

"They, curious oft of mortal actions, deign  
In forms like these to round the earth and  
main;  
Just and unjust recording in their mind,  
And with sure eyes inspecting all mankind."

Ovid also introduces Jupiter as coming from heaven to redress wrongs.

"The clamors of this vile, degenerate age,  
The cries of orphans, and th' oppressor's  
rage,  
Had reached the stars: 'I will descend,'  
said I,  
In hope to prove this loud complaint a lie.  
Disguised in human shape, I travelled round  
The world, and more than what I heard,  
I found."

Milman remarks, that "It is remarkable, that in this wild and in-

land region, we find the old barbarous religion maintaining a lively and commanding influence over the popular mind. In the more civilized and commercial parts of the Roman world, in Ephesus, in Athens, or in Rome, such extraordinary cures as that of the cripple might have been publicly wrought, and might have excited a wondering interest in the multitude; but it may be doubted whether the lowest or most ignorant would have had so much faith in the old fabulous appearances of their own deities, as immediately to have imagined their actual and visible appearance in the persons of these surprising strangers. It is only in the remote and savage Lystra, where the Greek language had not predominated over the primitive barbarous dialect (probably a branch of the Capadocian), that the popular emotion instantly metamorphoses these public benefactors into the Jove and Mercury of their own temples."

12. *They called Barnabas, Jupiter, &c.* Jupiter was the principal deity of the ancient mythology, the father of gods and men, the ruler of heaven and earth. He was invested with the form of a grave, majestic old man, clothed with venerableness and awe, and having eyes expressive of deep meditation and commanding authority. "He is generally represented as sitting upon a golden or ivory throne, holding in one hand thunderbolts just ready to be hurled, and in the other a sceptre of cypress. His looks express majesty, his beard flows long and neglected, and the eagle stands with expanded wings at his feet." Barnabas, as being the older — for he was the uncle of Mark,

speaker. Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their 13 city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people. *Which* when the apostles, Bar- 14 nabas and Paul, heard *of*, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, and saying, Sirs, why do ye these 15 things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you, that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things

the Evangelist — and probably larger person, and less given to speaking than Paul, — was identified by the superstitious inhabitants as their tutelary deity, Jupiter. Whereas, Paul, who was younger and smaller, 2 Cor. x. 10, and an orator, they readily conjectured was Mercurius, or Mercury. This god was esteemed the patron of eloquence, and the inventor of the lyre; and was represented as a young man, with a winged cap, and small wings on his feet, and a wand of wonderful powers, called *caduceus*, which was also winged and bound with two serpents. He was the messenger of the gods, and was fabled to attend Jupiter in his descents *in-cog.* upon the earth. It has been observed that “the persuasion of their being Jupiter and Mercury might gain the more easily on the minds of the Lycaonians, on account of the well-known fable of Jupiter and Mercury, who were said to have descended from heaven in human shape, and to have been entertained by Lycaon, from whom the Lycaonians took their name.”

13. *The priest of Jupiter*, i. e. probably, the principal one, for a temple usually had several priests. — *Which was before their city*. Jupiter was represented and worshipped, in different places, as were all the heathen gods, under various characters, as the Thunderer, the Preserver, the Avenger, &c. In this instance, he was honored by the Lycaonians as the founder and protector of their city,

and a temple was erected to his service in front of the town. — *Oxen*. It was customary to sacrifice these animals to Jupiter. It is likely that two were brought, one to be offered to each of the supposed divinities. — *Garlands*. They adorned the statues of the gods, and also the victims to be offered, with wreaths of flowers. Thus Ovid says,

“A purple fillet his broad brow adorns,  
With flowery garlands, crowns, and gilded horns.”

Also, Virgil,

“The victim ox that was for altars pressed,  
Trimmed with white ribbons, and with garlands dressed.”

— *Unto the gates*. It is not clear whether we are to understand the *gates* of the city, or the *portals of the temple*, or the *porch* of the house, where the apostles were. — *Sacrifice with the people*. This act of offering sacrifice was the surest test of their sincerity and earnest superstition.

14. *Heard of*. They had not been aware of what was in progress, until the impious act was almost consummated. — *Rent their clothes, and ran*, &c. By these strong and violent tokens, they expressed their abhorrence of the contemplated sacrifice, and arrested the idolatrous worship.

15. *We also are men of like passions with you*. Chap. x. 26. This rendering gives an improper turn to the passage. The original is rather, “We are *men* — not gods; like-affected with you;” subject to the infirmities, conditions, changes, of

16 that are therein: who in times past suffered all nations to walk  
17 in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without  
witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and

mortality. James v. 17.—*Preach unto you, &c.* We are not only frail mortals ourselves, but the identical object of our labors and teachings is, to reform these abominations of idolatry, and establish the faith and worship of the one true God.—*These vanities.* These sacrificial rites offered to imaginary divinities are so called, as being nothing, having no substantial or useful existence in the sense claimed for them by their worshippers. 1 Sam. xii. 21; 1 Kings xvi. 13; Jer. xiv. 22. God is THE REALITY, not bits of wood or stone, or the deities they represent, which have no life themselves, and which are capable of giving none to their devotees. Such seems to be the sense of the apostle.—*The living God.* As contradistinguished from these vain idols and their rites, and from dead men deified and adored.—*Which made heaven, and earth, &c.* Gen. i. 1. This was a chief reason why he was entitled to the supreme homage of all his intelligent and rational offspring.

16, 17. *In times past*, i. e. previously to the advent of the Messiah.—*Suffered all nations.* Chap. xvii. 30. Or, more exactly, “all the Gentiles,” for the Jews were favored with a divine revelation and interposition. By this is meant, that these people were left to the light of nature. We are not to understand that God was not displeased with the idolatry and sinfulness of the heathen world, but, nevertheless, he did not directly interpose, or send special prophets, as he did to the Jews. The experiment was demonstrated on a large scale, in the Oriental, Greek, and Roman civilization, of the inability of man, unvisited by light from Heaven, to grope his way through the twilight

of a natural faith, and attain to full peace and blessedness.—*Nevertheless*, i. e. although he granted no direct revelation, yet he manifested, by the ordinary course of his divine Providence, his love and good will to mankind. In the words of Plotinus, a heathen philosopher of the school of Plato, “God has afforded to all men a measure of heavenly truth, which, though latent or scanty, may yet suffice, as he has judged, for healing to some; and for a testimony to all. If we attend to the voice of created nature, it will loudly proclaim its origin, not from the Cretan Jupiter or the Arcadian Mercury, but from the unknown God whom Paul preached to the Athenians.”—*In that he did good.* The beautiful reasoning of the apostle on the amount of knowledge which might be gleaned, if men were faithful, even from nature and providence, in relation to the character of the Creator, is further developed in Rom. i, 18—21, and is corroborated by many sayings of ancient heathen writers, who often discoursed of One God in a style far superior to their age. It was a remark of Synesius, a bishop of Cyrene, that “to do good was, so to speak, the very nature of the Deity, as much as for fire to warm, or for light to shine.”—*Gave us rain from heaven.* Or, from the clouds. The mention of rain, in particular, as one of the clearest manifestations of the divine benignity, was in accordance with an old Jewish saying, that “there were three keys—of life, rain, and the resurrection—always kept in God’s own hand,”—not given to any delegate or proxy; as indicating a more direct and special act of power on the part of the Supreme. The apparent irregularity with which it falls, and

fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. And 18 with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them. — And there came thither 19 *certain Jews* from Antioch, and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and having stoned Paul, drew *him* out of the city, sup-

the difficulty of foretelling it, and its absolute necessity to the prolonged existence of either animate or vegetable creatures, single the rain out as worthy of emphasis in the brief record of Heaven's gifts to man. "The circuit of the waters," in their wonderful passage from the sea into the atmosphere by evaporation, their condensation into clouds and rain, fall upon the earth, formation into streams and mighty rivers, and return to the great reservoir of the ocean from which they issued in an invisible form, is, to every devout mind, a perpetual miracle of celestial power and goodness. *Jer. v. 24.* — *Fruitful seasons.* Which intimately depend upon seasonable showers and dews. — *Filling our hearts with food and gladness*, i. e. filling our bodies with suitable food, and cheering the heart with the rich bounties of nature. "Of all the common operations of Providence," remarks Henry, "the heathen chose to form their notions of the supreme God by that which speaks terror, and is proper to strike an awe of him upon us, and that was *the thunder*, and therefore they called Jupiter *the thunderer*, and represented him with a thunderbolt in his hand; and it appears, by *Ps. xxix. 3*, that that ought not to be overlooked; but the apostle here, to engage us to worship God, sets before us his beneficence, that we may have good thoughts of him in every thing wherein we have to do with him, may love him, and delight in him, as one that doth good, doth good to us, doth good to all, in giving us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons." Cicero, the Roman orator and heathen phi-

losopher, also finely says, "And here, on this earth on which we dwell, the sky does not cease to be genial, nor the trees, in their proper season, to shoot forth branches, nor the vines to bud and bring their reviving fruits to perfection, nor the boughs to hang down with ripe berries, nor the corn to yield its expected increase; but all things flourish, the springs are continually running, and the fields are clothed with grass. And then, if we consider what a multitude there is of cattle, partly for food, partly for carrying, and partly for clothing our bodies; and the nature of man himself, who seems to be formed for contemplating heaven and the gods, and to adore and worship them, and that the whole earth and sea lie open for his use; when we see and consider these, and innumerable other things, can we doubt whether there is a Superior Being, who is either the Creator of these things, if they were indeed created, as Plato thinks; or, if they always were, as Aristotle supposes, who is the Manager and Disposer of so great a work and charge?" "If we hearken to the voice of the world," says Plotinus, "we shall hear it say nothing but 'God hath made me.'" So much for the witness which even the wisest heathen bore to the truth of Paul's argument.

19. *Certain Jews from Antioch, &c.* They followed the apostles with implacable hostility from place to place. *Chap. xiii. 50, 51, xiv. 2.* — *Persuaded the people.* Or, gained over the people, or, instigated them. — *Stoned Paul.* As the more conspicuous for his zeal. See *2 Cor. xi. 23, 25.* —

20 posing he had been dead. Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city :

21 And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and to 22 Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, *and* exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much

*Drew him out of the city.* It is observable that the heathen hesitate not to stone Paul in the city, and afterwards drag him out, probably in a rough and brutal manner, as if to leave him outside of the walls, to be exposed as food for beasts and birds of prey ; whereas, Stephen, according to the different usage of the Jews, was first hurried from the holy city, and then stoned to death without its walls. Chap. vii. 57, 58.—*Supposing he had been dead.* Whether so in reality, or not, is left undetermined. The change of the people, from superstitious homage of the apostles to murderous hatred, took place, perhaps, after some interval of time had elapsed, between ver. 18 and 19. It was occasioned, too, by emissaries coming from other places and incensing the Lystrians. There was, also, in all likelihood, a change of parties,—as suggested by the Abbotts,—the friends of Paul and Barnabas being thrown into discouragement and inaction, and the other side, which had always cherished a deadly animosity, being stimulated to new zeal, and rising to an ascendancy.

20. *Howbeit, &c.* Though they supposed him dead, yet, while the disciples surrounded him, he was restored so as to be able to return into the city, and on the next day to set out on a journey. The facts, that Paul had been stoned so as to be apparently dead, and dragged through the streets, and cast out of the town,

as a common malefactor ; and that, after such violence was done him, he should be able to get up, and go into the city, and depart on the morrow to another place, bear a strong impression that he was restored by something more than ordinary means. 2 Tim. iii. 11.—*Derbe.* To this place Gaius belonged, mentioned in Acts xx. 4, and 3 John 1.

21, 22 *Had taught many.* Or, better, according to the margin, “had made many disciples.” Derbe was the ultimate point of their travels ; and they fearlessly return through the same places, Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, where they had been fiercely persecuted.—*Confirming.* Or, strengthening. No religious ceremony or sacrament is here alluded to, such as is now called *confirmation*, but a moral, spiritual influence, infusing new energy into their faith.—*And.* This word is in Italics, and should be left out. They confirmed the souls of the disciples, exhorting, or by exhorting, them to continue in the faith.—*Through much tribulation, &c.* In reference, not to the ordinary trials of the Christian, but to the peculiar dangers which beset the disciples of that period, from the hostility of bigoted Jews and superstitious Gentiles. John xvi. 33; 2 Tim. iii. 12. There is an important sense, however, in which we must in all ages enter into the kingdom of heaven, by passing through the furnace of affliction, and “learning obedience by the things we suffer.”

tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. And when they had 23 ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed. And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to 24 Pamphylia. And when they had preached the word in Perga, 25 they went down into Attalia: and thence sailed to Antioch, 26 from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God, for the work which they fulfilled. — And when they were 27 come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. And there they abode long time 28 with the disciples.

23. *Ordained.* Rather, “chose,” or, “appointed.” The Greek does not express the idea of ordination, as now understood by the Christian world.

— *Elders.* Note on chap. xi. 30. In order to perpetuate the influence of the gospel, in the places where they had labored, they organized the disciples into a body, and appointed, or caused to be appointed, officers to take charge of each church, and teach, exhort, and superintend its affairs. 1 Pet. v. 1–3. They consecrated them to their work with prayer and fasting, and commended them to the divine protection, in which they had the fullest confidence.

24, 25. *Pisidia — Pamphylia.* See notes on chap. xiii. 13, 14. — *Into Attalia.* Or, better, “to Attalia,” as we usually say *into*, or *to*, in speaking of a country, but *to*, in speaking of a town. Attalia was a seaport of Pamphylia, built by Attalus Philadelphus, king of Pergamus, in the second century before Christ, and called after the name of the founder. It is now Antali. They here took ship for Syria.

26. *Antioch.* Not, of course, the Antioch of ver. 21, which was in Pisidia, but the city of this name in Syria, chap. xiii. 1. They had been absent, according to the computa-

tions of some, about three years, on this first apostolical journey; during which time they had visited Salamis and Paphos, on the island of Cyprus, and Perga, Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, Attalia, and other places, in three of the provinces of Asia Minor, viz., Pamphylia, Pisidia, and Lycania. — *Recommended to the grace, &c.* They were sent forth from Antioch on this missionary enterprise, and committed, by the prayers of the church, to the divine favor. They had performed the work assigned them, and now returned to give an account of their labors to those who had given them their commission.

27, 28. *Rehearsed.* Or, related. *With them.* By them, by their means. They had been the instruments, in the hand of God, of accomplishing great good. — *Opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.* 1 Cor. xvi. 9. This was a subject of gratitude, that the blessings of the Messiah’s reign were shared by the Gentiles; and the opportunity given of spreading the truth, as it is in Jesus, beyond all national and territorial limits. — *Abode long time.* How long cannot be definitely ascertained; but, as some conjecture, about two, others five years. Some insert, at this blank period in the history by Luke, the transactions of Gal. ii.

## CHAPTER XV.

*The Gentile Controversy is settled by the General Assembly at Jerusalem, and the Decision made known among the Churches.*

AND certain men which came down from Judea, taught the brethren, *and said*, Except ye be circumcised after the manner

We observe, in this chapter, (1.) the different character of the preaching addressed to the Jews, chap. xii. 16–41, compared with that directed to the Gentiles, ver. 15, 16; the one being appealed to on the ground of the revealed religion which they already possessed; and the other on the great institutes of natural theology, open to those who did not enjoy a special revelation,—an adaptation to the wants and condition of each class, worthy of the wisdom from on high. (2.) The diffusive, missionary spirit of the gospel,—a little leaven seeking to leaven the whole lump. The disciples did not wait until they had made converts of all the people of Antioch before they sent forth the heralds of salvation to other lands, but early scattered the seed of truth, far and wide, over many provinces and countries. It is an example for every age, and for every body of Christian believers: “Freely ye have received, freely give.”

## CHAPTER XV.

The great Jewish and Gentile controversy, at this point, again broke in upon the peace of the church, and arrayed its members in hostile attitude towards one another. For a statement of its merits, see the introduction to chap. xi. As the law given by Moses was the law of God, the Jews could not understand its temporary character and object, but supposed it to be perpetually binding upon them, and upon all who became members of the Messiah’s kingdom. The aim of his coming was judged

to be the perfecting and confirming of the law, not the superseding and abrogation thereof. Hence, when, as at the period of Paul’s return to Antioch, the Christian body had incorporated into itself a large number of Gentiles, the Jewish Christians were alarmed; they saw their favorite system falling into disuse, Moses superseded, his law not observed, and multitudes of those, whom they had regarded as the offscouring of the earth, pressing into the very holy of holies of the Messiah’s church, without conforming to the earlier ritual given from heaven. In this chapter, we shall see the wisdom of the Christian leaders of both parties in managing this delicate and momentous affair; though many of the Jewish converts still maintained the controversy long afterwards, as the epistles of Paul testify—many of which were expressly written to meet this problem of the age, but have been wofully misunderstood, because their leading purpose, as controversial writings, has not been kept distinctly and steadily in view.

1. *Certain men which came down from Judea*, i. e. what are sometimes called *Jewish zealots*, or *Judaizing teachers*, because of the zeal and pertinacity with which they urged the observance of the law of Moses upon the Gentile disciples. Judea and Jerusalem were naturally the headquarters of this party, whence they sallied forth to spread their views wherever Christian churches flourished.—*Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses*. Or, “according to the institution of Moses.” As cir-

of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them. But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees, which believed, say-

circumcision was the great rite of the Jewish religion, it stands as a general term, descriptive of the ritual of which it was so essential a part. The same use of the word is often introduced into the epistles of Paul; the Jews being classed as those of the circumcision, and the Gentiles as those of the uncircumcision. Gal. vi. 15. — *Ye cannot be saved*, i. e. enjoy the favors of the Messiah's kingdom, and inherit the promises of God, attached to the new covenant made with his people. Before the advent of Christ, there had been a difference of opinion among the Jews themselves, as Josephus relates, respecting the necessity of proselytes being circumcised, — some holding stricter views than others.

2. *Paul and Barnabas.* They took the Gentile side of the question. Eph. iii. 2 — 6. The change of Paul from a zealous Pharisee to a generous-minded apostle bears the impress of a divine work. — *No small dissension.* The question was important, great interests were at stake, and it was natural that strong feelings should be enlisted on both sides. — *Go up to Jerusalem, &c.* The authority and sanctity of the holy city to a Jewish mind seem to have been easily transferred to the Christian convert. The disciples still turned their faces to Mount Zion, and were

enlightened. Ps. xx. 2. There was the empty tomb of the ascended Master. There was “the goodly fellowship” of the twelve, now reduced to eleven, not by treachery, but the more honorable cause of martyrdom. There were the brethren, and the first Christian church; and thither they would naturally resort for counsel and authority to compose their differences. Gal. ii. 11 — 14, v. 2; Phil. iii. 3; Titus i. 9 — 11.

3, 4. *Brought on their way*, i. e. escorted, or honorably attended, by a delegation of the church, when they set out from Antioch. Chap. xvii. 15. — *Phenice, &c.* Phenicia and Samaria lay directly on the route to Judea from Antioch. — *The conversion of the Gentiles, &c.* This occasioned great joy, because it was unexpected, and because the Gentiles could come to Jesus without traversing the circuitous route of Jewish rites and ceremonies. The labors of Paul and Barnabas in Cyprus, Asia Minor, and Syria, had yielded rich first-fruits of the Gentile harvest. — *Received of the church, &c.* In a hospitable and cordial manner. — *That God had done with them.* Or, by them. They constantly held themselves up as the instruments of the Divine Agent.

5, 6. *Certain of the sect of the Pharisees.* Who would, retaining

ing, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command *them* to keep the law of Moses.

6 And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of  
 7 this matter. And when there had been much disputing, Peter  
 rose up and said unto them, Men *and* brethren, ye know how  
 that a good while ago, God made choice among us, that the  
 Gentiles, by my mouth, should hear the word of the gospel, and  
 8 believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them wit-  
 9 ness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as *he did* unto us: and  
 put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by

their old ideas, as most earnest stic-  
 klers for the letter of the law, take the  
 lead on this question, and oppose  
 the admission of the Gentiles to the  
 church on any more liberal ground  
 than that of submission to the yoke  
 of Moses. — *And to command them*,  
 &c. A similar statement to that in  
 ver. 1. We here see that the de-  
 mand was not that the Gentiles should  
 merely be circumcised, but that they  
 should comply with the whole ritual  
 of Moses. — *The apostles and elders*.  
 From ver. 12, 22, 23, we infer that  
 the brethren, or a large body of the  
 disciples, were also present. It would  
 seem to have been in a popular,  
 rather than a limited assembly; de-  
 signed, not to enact laws so much as  
 to give advice; not to command, but  
 persuade. It has been common to  
 call this “the first general council”  
 of Jerusalem; but the informality of  
 its organization, the mild and rec-  
 ommendatory tone of its decisions,  
 render it so far unlike the subsequent  
 associations of that name, that it is,  
 perhaps, inappropriate and undesir-  
 able to call it a council. As observed  
 by Lightfoot, “It was not a conven-  
 tion premeditated and solemnly sum-  
 moned, but only occasional and emer-  
 gent.” — *To consider of this matter*.  
 They came to deliberate, to speak,  
 and hear, and compare, and weigh  
 opinions, not to publish, in a dictato-  
 rial tone, results already attained.

But if inspiration had been plenary  
 in relation to all subjects connected  
 with the gospel, it would only have  
 been requisite for the apostles to  
 speak, in order to be heard and  
 obeyed; and they would not have  
 disagreed among themselves.

7. *Much disputing*. Or, discuss-  
 ing. Because the gospel is a reli-  
 gion from heaven, it does not follow  
 that all who believe in it will be ex-  
 empt from some passions of anger  
 and occasional flashes of revenge;  
 for though “the spirit indeed is will-  
 ing, the flesh is weak.” And though  
 the apostles were inspired, it did not  
 prevent Paul from being hasty, chap.  
 xxiii. 3—5, and Peter timid and vac-  
 illating, Gal. ii. 11—14. — *A good  
 while ago*. Ten years, or more, as  
 computed by some. Chap. x. — *God  
 made choice*, i. e. in the vision of an-  
 imals, and the accompanying cir-  
 cumstances, he showed to Peter the  
 mystery of the kingdom of the Mes-  
 siah, viz., the free admission of Gen-  
 tile converts to Christianity without  
 passing under the Jewish yoke of  
 bondage.

8, 9. The gift of the Holy Spirit  
 constituted a strong argument in  
 proof of the lawfulness of receiving  
 Gentiles in full communion and sym-  
 pathy without the Mosaic obser-  
 vances. God, who knew the heart,  
 and what qualifications were neces-  
 sary, had borne witness, had ap-

faith. Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the 10 neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear ? But we believe, that through the grace of the Lord 11 Jesus Christ, we shall be saved, even as they. — Then all the 12 multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among

proved, as with authentic voice, of the course of Peter, Paul, and Barnabas. — *Put no difference.* He not only gave gifts, but gave as many rich tokens of his love and sanction, to the Gentiles, as to the converts from the Jews. And as they were not pure ceremonially, according to Jewish notions, they had been purified by faith, 1 Peter i. 22, placed on another ground of sanctity and justification, viz., that of the believing state of the heart.

10. *Tempt ye God.* See note on Mat. iv. 7. Or, needlessly expose them to dangers and trouble ; as it would be resisting the will of God and periling the virtue of the Gentile convert, to require him to incorporate Judaism and the gospel in one. For, as Farmer observes, “ To tempt God, is to make an improper trial of his power, to make new and unreasonable demands upon it, after sufficient evidence has been already afforded ; and to do this, not barely from presumption, but from distrust.”

— *To put a yoke.* This imagery is frequent, in the Scriptures, to describe the imposition of any burden, or duty, or restraint. Lam. i. 14, iii. 27 ; Mat. xi. 29, 30, xxiii. 4 ; Gal. v. 1 ; 1 Tim. vi. 1. — *Which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear.* Here is a free confession of the burdensome character of the Mosaic ritual, particularly as it was overladen with numerous traditions and comments by the Rabbins. The moral law was not annulled by the advent of Christ ; nor was the great purpose of the Mosaic dispensation frustrated ; — Jesus came to fulfil, to

carry it out, not to destroy it ; — but the special enactments, the ceremonial and external apparatus of that system, were to pass away, as no longer needed, as a burden useless and hurtful to lay upon the necks of the Gentile converts. It was a tempting of God, a frustrating of his will, and provoking of his displeasure, to impose these old trammels of a past age upon the youthful limbs of a new faith ; to fetter the liberty of Christ, of spiritual manhood, with the leading-strings of Jewish childhood.

11. *Through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, &c.* All were to look for salvation to the mercy revealed through the Messiah, to the favor of God in Christ, not to any external observances, or ritual obedience. The stress of the sentence is, that, so far from these legal requirements, circumcision and sacrifices, being essential to the Gentiles as a ground of acceptance with the Most High, they were not even necessary to the Jews themselves ; for they likewise could not now be justified by the works of the law, or compliance with the Mosaic ceremonial, but by faith in the mercy of God in the revelation of his Son. The unworthy compliances of Peter with Jewish prejudices, related in Gal. ii. 11 – 14, no doubt occurred several years before, when it is conjectured he went to Antioch in the Herodian persecution. Chap. xii. 17, 25.

12. *Declaring what miracles, &c.* After Peter had concluded his remarks, Paul and Barnabas gave their testimony also to the same effect. They had been empowered by God

13 the Gentiles by them. — And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men *and* brethren, hearken unto me. 14 Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, 15 to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree 16 the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it 17 up: that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who

to work miracles among the Gentiles, which showed that he approved of the course they pursued in admitting them into the Christian church without circumcision. He would not have granted such a sanction to their labors, if they adopted false principles of action in their ministry. Though they were inspired, yet the argument from facts would be more convincing to their Jewish opponents than their mere words, or the statement of impressions received by their own minds.

13, 14. *James answered.* Or, "made an address." This was James the Less, the son of Alpheus, sometimes called the bishop of Jerusalem by the early writers. He was president, apparently, of the assembly; and after others had expressed their opinions, he summed up the matter, and gave a species of decision as to the best course to be pursued. Neander remarks, that, "On account of his strict observance of the law, he was held in the greatest reverence by the Jews, and in his words, therefore, the greatest confidence would be placed. He brought their deliberations to a close, by a proposal which corresponded to his own peculiar moderation and mildness, and was adapted to compose the existing differences. Referring to Peter's address, he said that this apostle had shown how God had already received the Gentiles, in order to form a people dedicated to his service. And

this agreed with the predictions of the prophets, who had foretold that, in the times when the decayed theocracy was to be gloriously revived, the worship of Jehovah would be extended also among the Gentiles. Accordingly, what had recently occurred among the Gentiles need not excite their astonishment. God, who effected all this, was now fulfilling his eternal counsel, as he had promised by his prophets. Since, therefore, by this eternal counsel of God, the Gentiles were to be incorporated into his kingdom by the Messiah, let them not dare to do any thing which might obstruct or retard the progress of this work. They ought not to lay any unnecessary burdens on the converted Gentiles." — *Men and brethren.* Brethren. — *Simeon.* Hebrew of Simon. — *At the first.* Better, "first." Chap. x. — *A people for his name.* As the Hebrews had been chosen out of other nations for the recipients of a purer faith and worship, so now were converts gathered out of the Gentile world to constitute a new race and kingdom of men for the glory of God. Peter appeared, in this assembly, as possessing no superior authority to the other speakers, which could favor the papal claims of his supremacy in the apostolic college. On the contrary, if any one took the lead, it was James.

15 — 18. *Of the prophets.* The book of the minor prophets, of whom Amos, who flourished about 780 or

doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from 13 the beginning of the world. Wherefore my sentence is, that we 19 trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: but that we write unto them that they abstain from pollu- 20 tions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled,

790 B. C., was one. — *As it is written.* See Amos ix. 11, 12. The particular aim of the prophet seems to have been, to describe the restoration of the Jewish prosperity, the rebuilding of the temple after the Babylonish captivity, and the spread of the true faith even beyond Judea, all which was fulfilled about two hundred years afterwards. James employed this by way of accommodation, as illustrative of the admission of the Gentiles into the Messiah's kingdom. Peter had reasoned from the gifts of the Spirit, and the purification of faith, granted to the Gentiles, ver. 8, 9; Paul and Barnabas, from miracles done, by the divine power and approbation, among the heathen; and James adduces the voice of the elder dispensation itself, which embraced the Gentiles in its plan of mercy. — *After this, &c.* i. e. the destruction of Israel. — *The tabernacle,* i. e. figuratively, the family, or people, of David, who would be restored and built up again in their own land. The quotation is not made strictly according to the Hebrew, or the Greek version. — *The residue of men.* Or, the Gentiles, the rest of the human family besides the Jews. — *Known unto God, &c.* A portion of this verse is deemed spurious by Griesbach and other critics. They read it as follows, beginning with the last clause of ver. 17: “Who doeth all these things, which were known from the beginning of the world.” It is probably a remark of James, not a quotation from Amos; and implies, that the purposes of God were known to him from the beginning. He foresaw

from the first the whole course of events, and the development of the patriarchal, Mosaic, prophetic, and Christian dispensation. His plan was eternal.

19. *My sentence is.* Or, “I judge or conclude.” — *That we trouble not them, &c.* By imposing upon them the yoke of ceremonial observances.

— *The Gentiles — turned to God,* i. e. Gentile converts. There is no evidence, in this verse, that James passed a decree by his own authority, but simply offered what, in modern phrase, would be called a *resolution*, for the consideration of the assembly.

20. *That we write unto them.* Because the Gentile converts were scattered about in distant places. The decision contained four prohibitions.

— *Pollutions of idols.* A custom was prevalent in Gentile countries, that, after a sacrifice had been offered in a heathen temple, and a portion had been given to the priests, the remainder of the offerings was either exposed for sale in the market, or served up by the worshipper for the entertainment of his friends, either in his own house or at the temple of the idol. This injunction was, therefore, designed to forbid the Gentile Christians from eating the flesh of animals which had been offered in sacrifice to the heathen gods. The temptation to which they were exposed, in this respect, and the corruption which was thus introduced into their faith, are described in 1 Cor. viii., x. 14—23.

— *Fornication.* This is mentioned in connexion with idolatry, because the worship of the heathen temples was often polluted by this vice, and

21 and *from* blood. For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath day.

the professed acts of religion itself mingled with the most horrible licentiousness. The tendencies to this sin in the dissolute cities of the East, covered as it was by a professedly sacred sanction, were so strong, that the caution to the Gentile disciples was by no means superfluous. 1 Cor. v. It is the opinion of some that, by this clause, marriage with idolaters, or within the degrees prohibited by the law, or, in general, all intercourse forbidden thereby, was here excluded, as offering dangerous temptation to apostasy from the Christian faith.—*From things strangled, and from blood.* They were to refrain from eating the flesh of animals which had been strangled, which was an abomination to the Jews, but in high esteem among the heathen; for suffocated or strangled flesh was regarded as very delicious by the ancients. Herodotus relates that the Scythians were accustomed to strangle the animals offered in sacrifice to their gods. This precept, therefore, was aimed against cruelty, luxury, and intemperance. Abstinence from blood is enjoined on the ground of Gen. ix. 4; Lev. xvii. 10—14; Deut. xii. 23; 1 Sam. xiv. 34. Milman remarks, that “The influence of James effected a discreet and temperate compromise: Judaism, as it were, capitulated on honorable terms. The Christians were to be left to that freedom enjoyed by the Proselytes of the Gate, but they were enjoined to pay so much respect to those with whom they were associated in religious worship, as to abstain from those practices which were most offensive to their habits. The partaking of the sacrificial feasts in the idolatrous temples was so plainly repugnant to

the first principles, either of the Jewish or the Christian theism, as to be altogether irreconcilable with the professed opinions of a proselyte to either. The using of things strangled, and blood, for food, appears to have been the most revolting to Jewish feeling; and perhaps, among the dietetic regulations of the Mosaic law, none, in a southern climate, was more conducive to health. The other article in this celebrated decree was a moral prohibition, but not improbably directed more particularly against the dissolute rites of those Syrian and Asiatic religions, in which prostitution formed an essential part, and which prevailed to a great extent in the countries bordering upon Palestine.” Lardner has clearly shown that these prohibitions were rather temporary and ceremonial than moral, and were designed at the same time to bring the Gentile Christians nearer to the Jewish converts, by abstaining from those things which were abominable to the latter; and also to wean the Gentile disciples from their heathen customs and mode of living, and their sensual and idolatrous rites. A few authorities add, as a fifth injunction, “And not to do to others, what they would not have done to themselves,”—a very good command, but an unauthorized reading in the text.

21. *For Moses of old time hath, &c.* The sense of this verse appears to be that, as the above things were essentially prohibited by the Jewish law, which was read in every city on the Sabbath day, the Gentile converts ought to abstain from them out of deference to the feelings of their Jewish brethren, if for no other reason. If these habits, to which the Gentiles had been addicted while

Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, <sup>22</sup> to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch, with Paul and Barnabas; *namely*, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren: and wrote *letters* by them <sup>23</sup> after this manner; The apostles, and elders, and brethren, *send* greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch, and Syria, and Cilicia. *Forasmuch* as we have heard, that cer- <sup>24</sup> tain which went out from us, have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, *Ye must* be circumcised, and keep

idolaters, were not rigidly discontinued, there would be a constant source of irritation existing, from the displeasure of the Jewish disciples towards their fellow-Christians. — *Being read in the synagogues every Sabbath day.* Josephus says, “Our lawgiver, Moses, that we might not be ignorant of his laws, ordered us to let all other business alone, and assemble ourselves for hearing the law read, and getting a thorough knowledge of it, not once only, or twice, or frequently, but upon every Sabbath day; a thing which all other lawgivers seem to have omitted.”

22. *Then pleased it, &c.* There seems to have been no further discussion, but all agreed with the opinion of the wise apostle. In the language of Luther, “Therefore they agree that James should prescribe, and since their consciences are left free and unfettered, that, they think, is enough for them; they were not so envious as to wish to quarrel about a little thing, provided it could be done without damage.” — *Chosen men of their own company.* Probably some individuals were selected who were on the Jewish side of the question, as Paul and Barnabas took the part of the Gentiles. For it was desirable, in order to gain credence with the Jews at Antioch, that some of their own party should make known to them the decree. — *Judas, surnamed Barsabas.* Nothing is elsewhere known of this individual.

— *Silas.* Otherwise called, in the Greek form, *Silvanus*. Chap. xvi. 25, xvii. 4; 2 Cor. i. 19.

23. *Wrote letters.* Literally, “having written.” It is not implied that more than one epistle was written, directed to the different churches. — *And brethren.*

The assembly consisted, not only of the apostles and elders, but also of private Christians, who had a voice in its decisions as much as Peter or Paul. In short, it was a species of popular convention, not a strict council in which none, excepting those possessing certain credentials and qualifications, could have a seat. — *Send greeting, &c.* The brotherly and benignant spirit of this letter missive is widely different from most of the decrees of councils, and bulls of popes, which have been ostensibly issued in the Christian name. The meaning of the word “greeting,” in the original, is, literally, “to rejoice,” or, “to wish joy or health.” — *Antioch — Syria — Cilicia.* The controversy raged principally in these places, though the letter was equally applicable to the whole Gentile world.

24. *Certain which went out from us.* Who are mentioned in ver. 1, but who had no authority from the church at Jerusalem. — *Troubled you with words.* Or, disturbed you with doctrines and discourses. — *Subverting your souls.* Rather, “unsettling,” or, perverting your minds from the truth.

25 the law; to whom we gave no *such* commandment: it seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen 26 men unto you, with our beloved Barnabas and Paul: men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27 We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell *you* 28 the same things by mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these 29 necessary things; that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye 30 well. — So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they deliv- 31 ered the epistle. *Which* when they had read, they rejoiced for

25, 26. *It seemed good unto us, &c.* The whole character of the epistle is popular and advisory, without any stamp of absolute authority on one side, or cringing subserviency on the other. — *With one accord.* Or, better, “all together.” — *Hazarded their lives.* Chap. xiv. This testimony to their heroic and self-sacrificing spirit was added as a moral weight to their authority; nothing was claimed on the score of official dignity, but they were entitled to be heard as all-devoted ministers of Christ, ready to yield up every thing to his cause.

27. *Tell you the same things by mouth.* Or, “verbally.” Belonging to the Jerusalem party, Judas and Silas would be able to explain, in private and public, more at length, the reasons of the decision, and soften the rigid prejudices of their countrymen, without being subject to the suspicions and jealousies with which Paul and Barnabas were regarded.

28, 29. *Seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us*, i. e. to us acting under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Their decision was made under the divine sanction in general, though there is no special inspiration at the time claimed. — *These necessary things.* Necessary to the

peace and prosperity of the Christian churches. — *Ye shall do well.* It will be well with you, or promote your salvation. Doddridge observes, that “This gentle manner of concluding was worthy the apostolical wisdom and goodness. Too soon did succeeding councils, of inferior authority, change it for the style of anathemas; forms which have, I doubt not, proved an occasion of consecrating some of the worst passions of the human mind under sacred names, and which, like some ill-judged weapons of war, are most likely to hurt the hand from which they are thrown.” — *Fare ye well.* Literally, “be ye strong, well.”

30, 31. *Had gathered the multitude together*, i. e. the Antiochian church. The popular air of all the proceedings in this chapter is very observable. The great body of Christians in Antioch met together to listen to the advice which had been sent to them from the great body of Christians at Jerusalem. — *Rejoiced for the consolation.* Or, “for the direction,” or, instruction. They rejoiced because the Gentiles were exempted from a painful yoke, and their minds were definitely settled on this agitating question.

the consolation. And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them. And after they had tarried there a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles. Notwithstanding, it pleased Silas to abide there still. Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

And some days after, Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren, in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, *and see* how they do. And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with

32, 33. *Being prophets.* Or, religious teachers.—*Confirmed them*, i. e. strengthened their minds in the decision already made. The epistle was very brief, and there was much room for explaining and enforcing it.—*In peace.* The whole business had been amicably adjusted, and the delegates from Jerusalem were dismissed in brotherly love. The great controversy, however, was by no means put to a final rest, for no small portion of the epistles of Paul is occupied with its discussion; in which he combated, with the greatest energy and eloquence, the bigotry of the Jewish Christians, and strove for the liberty of Christ.

34. This whole verse has been regarded as of doubtful authority, by numerous critics, not being found in many authorities. Some manuscripts add to the received text, “but Judas only departed.”

35, 36. The history of Paul and Barnabas is again resumed, and their powerful exertions described in promoting, both at home and abroad, that cause which was dearer to them than ease or life itself.—*Let us go again.* The zeal of Paul projected a second journey throughout all places

which they had previously visited. The dangers to which many Christian converts were exposed, with Jewish exclusiveness on one side, and Gentile idolatry on the other, rendered these visitations necessary to the growth of feeble and persecuted churches. The coming of the apostles would infuse new courage into the desponding, awe overbearing enemies, and nip many luxuriant evils in the bud.—*How they do*, i. e. religiously.

37. *John, whose surname was Mark.* The evangelist. The interest of Barnabas in Mark, as his nephew, Col. iv. 10, was probably the chief reason of his being so strenuous to have him as a travelling companion and assistant.

38. *Who departed from them, &c.* We are left to conjecture, without any light from history on the subject. “It is uncertain whether Paul was unreasonable or Mark unfaithful.” But the former was highly displeased, and refused to have the latter as an associate in the work, though he afterwards became reconciled, and spoke of him with interest. Col. iv. 10; 2 Tim. iv. 11; Philemon, 24.

39 them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus.

40 And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by 41 the brethren unto the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.

29. *The contention was so sharp.* The severest animosities often grow out of the slightest cause, as more temper was manifested in this dispute about a small affair, than in the settlement of the Jewish and Gentile controversy. Though inspired, the apostles were still men, and were liable to the infirmities and passions of men. It adds to the credibility of the sacred history, to see them introduced as they were, in the costume of real life, with their sins and weaknesses about them; yet still holding forth the word of life, the light of the world, and doing and daring sublimely in its behalf. Paul and Barnabas become more real to our hearts and our faith, from the fact, that not every fault is studiously veiled from our sight, but they are seen to have the touch and soil of humanity upon them, and are presented to us in their distinct individuality.—*Cyprus.* The country of Barnabas. 1 Cor. ix. 6.

40, 41. *Chose Silas.* Ver. 34. It was desirable, and necessary, that the early preachers should not go forth single-handed. They needed sympathy, help, defence; in one word, a *confidant*. The wisdom of Jesus was shown by his sending forth his preachers two by two. Luke x. 1.—*The grace.* “The favor,” or, protection, of God.—*Confirming.* See note on chap. xiv. 22.

In reference to the subjects contained in this chapter, it may be remarked, (1.) In the language of Doddridge,—“How early did the spirit of bigotry and imposition be-

gin to work in the Christian church! that fatal humor of imposing a yoke on the neck of Christ’s disciples, by making indifferent things necessary! an unmanly and anti-Christian disposition; which has almost ever since been rending the church to pieces, and clamorously throwing the blame on those who have been desirous, on principles truly evangelical, to stand fast in the liberty with which their Divine Master has made them free. How foolish and how mischievous the error, of making terms of communion which Christ has never made! and how presumptuous the arrogance of invading his throne, to pronounce from thence damnatory sentences on those who will not, who dare not, submit to our uncommissioned and usurped authority!”

(2.) We learn that the nature of their inspiration was not such as to preclude the exercise of the apostles’ minds, difference of opinion upon some subjects among themselves, and liability to temptation and sin.

(3.) But, in the beautiful spirit in which the Gentile controversy was adjusted, we discern the Master’s benediction of peace and love still brooding, apparently, over the bands of his disciples, and uniting each to each, and all to him. How widely, how sadly different from that clangor of war and hoarse dispute which we hear echoing along the succeeding line of Christian history, from age to age, even to our own day! We despairingly ask, Where has been the love of the Master? Where has been the love of the brethren?

## CHAPTER XVI.

*Paul and Silas pass from Asia Minor to Macedonia; are imprisoned at Philippi, and delivered from their Enemies by the Interposition of God.*

THEN came he to Derbe and Lystra: and behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman which was a Jewess, and believed, but his father was a Greek: which was well reported of by the brethren that were 2 at Lystra and Iconium. Him would Paul have to go forth with 3 him; and took and circumcised him, because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a

(4.) In the assembly at Jerusalem, we read no rigid precedents for all following time, but valuable examples, whose spirit is immortal. There was no arrogance, no assumption, no tyranny. All hear, and are heard. It was, as it should be, a meeting of brothers. It breathed not maledictions, but benedictions. It was called for a special object, and that object is kept in view, and settled. From this first council, as it is called, was issued, though James presided, and Paul reasoned, not commands, but advice; not dictations, but suggestions. No creed was framed, no confession of faith drawn up, no mode of church government established, no ordinances enacted; but all was left in the same freedom in which it was found, and the injunctions made were prohibitory, not positive. Such a narrative ought not to be read in vain by the belligerent, exclusive, and self-righteous sects of Christendom!

## CHAPTER XVI.

1, 2. *Derbe and Lystra.* See note on chap. xiv. 6.—*Timotheus.* The Latin of *Timothy*, to whom Paul addressed two of his epistles.—*A Jewess, and believed,* i. e. was originally a Jewess, but afterwards became a convert to Christianity, probably at the time of the previous visit of Paul and Barnabas. Chap. xiv. A high char-

acter is given to Eunice, the mother, and to Lois, the grandmother, of Timothy, in 2 Tim. i. 5. He had been religiously educated at home, and the impressions of his early years were not lost. Prov. xxii. 6. Paley has noticed, in his *Horæ Paulinae*, the undesignated, and therefore weighty, coincidences between the fact here stated, that the mother of Timothy was a Jewess that *believed*, and the mention of her faith, 2 Tim. i. 5; and again between the silence of the epistle in relation to the other parent, and the silence of the Acts as to his faith; the circumstance only that he was a Gentile being given.—*A Greek.* Or, Gentile. It was contrary to the Jewish institutions for the chosen people to contract matrimonial alliances with heathen nations, Ezra ix. 12; but it was regarded as less heinous for females to marry Gentile husbands than for males to marry Gentile wives, though both connections were not infrequent.

—*Which.* Who, i. e. Timothy.—*Was well reported of.* Or, “held in good repute.” This testimony corresponds to his general character, as exhibited in both the epistles of Paul to his Christian laborer. 1 Tim. vi. 12; 2 Tim. i. 5, iii. 14, 15.

3. *Circumcised him—for they knew all.* Or, “all knew.” It was customary, according to the Talmuds, for the father to have control of his

4 Greek: and as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and 5 elders which were at Jerusalem. And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily. —

6 Now, when they had gone throughout Phrygia, and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the 7 word in Asia; after they were come to Mysia, they assayed to

children's religious observances; and, because his father was a Gentile, Timothy was not circumcised. As Paul wished to employ him as a co-worker with himself, among Jews as well as Gentiles, the rite of circumcision was performed as a mere prudential regulation, in deference to Jewish prejudices; since, for a half-Jew not to be circumcised, would be worse than for one, Gentile-born, to neglect it. Chap. xxi. 20. Paul was firm to withstand, to the last point, the requirement of circumcision as an essential to the Christian profession, as is evident from the case of Titus. Gal. ii. 3, 4, 5, v. 6. The decree of the Christian assembly at Jerusalem, chap. xv., had decided that matter in relation to the pure Gentiles; but Timothy was partially a debtor, so to speak, by his birth, to the Jewish law; and, though the apostle was so unyielding where the rite was demanded as necessary, he would, in the exercise of a generous charity, yield much to the scruples of his weaker brethren, where no principle would be compromised. Rom. xiv. 21; 1 Cor. viii. 13, ix. 20-22.

4, 5. *The decrees.* See chap. xv. 23-29. — *Established in the faith, and increased, &c.* This was the result of those wise and judicious measures that had been adopted, by which the Gentiles were exempted from the burdensome ritual of Moses. The prosperity of the Christian church, in every age, intimately depends upon its being kept pure from foreign admixtures of ceremonies and doc-

trines not essential to its nature, or perhaps at variance with it, when rightly understood.

6. *Phrygia.* A large central province of Asia Minor, surrounded by Cappadocia, Galatia, Mysia, Lydia, Caria, Lycaonia, Pisidia, Lysia, and Bithynia. Its inhabitants claimed to be the most ancient people in the world, and even the Egyptians yielded them the palm in that respect. The capital was Apamea. And, of

“the seven churches” mentioned in the Apocalypse, two, Laodicea and Colosse, to which Paul wrote one of his epistles, were situated in this district. — *Galatia.* Another province of Asia Minor, bounded by Pontus, Phrygia, Cappadocia, Paphlagonia, and Bithynia. It derived its name from a colony of Gauls, who emigrated thither, in the third century before Christ, in quest of new habitations. One of the epistles of Paul is directed to the Galatians. — *Were forbidden of the Holy Ghost.* Or, by a prompting, or revelation, of that Spirit of God, under whose sanctions and directions they acted. The reasons of the prohibition are not given, though we may conjecture that the object was to spread more widely the life-giving power of Christian truth. — *Asia.* By which is meant, not the whole region of Asia Minor, but Proconsular Asia, including several districts of Mysia, Caria, Lydia, &c., of which the capital was Ephesus. Rev. i. 11.

7. *Mysia.* This was situated in the north-west part of Asia Minor,

go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. And they, 8 passing by Mysia, came down to Troas. And a vision appeared 9 to Paul in the night: There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to 10 go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering, that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.

and had for its boundaries Bithynia, Phrygia, Lydia, the Mediterranean, Hellespont, and Propontis. Its principal town was Pergamus.—*Assayed.* Or, attempted.—*Bithynia.* A province east of Mysia, bounded by that district, Paphlagonia, Phrygia, Galatia, and the waters of the Euxine, Bosphorus, and Propontis.—*But the Spirit.* Or, as most critics read, in obedience to the best ancient authorities, “the spirit of Jesus;” the spirit which Jesus had promised. Dr. Adam Clarke observes that this “reading is undoubtedly genuine, and should be immediately restored to the text.”

8. *Troas.* Or, the Troad. This was the name of a maritime district of Mysia. It was immortalized as being the scene of the epic poem of Homer, the Iliad, and also of part of the *Aeneid*, by Virgil. Troas is also the name of a city in the district of Troas, at the distance of about four miles, as is conjectured, from the site of ancient Troy. Acts xx. 5; 2 Cor. ii. 12; 2 Tim. iv. 13.

9. *A vision, &c.* Whether by a dream, or otherwise, can only be matter of inference and conjecture.

—*A man of Macedonia.* A man in the costume of that land. Macedonia was a large country in Europe, lying across the waters of the Hellespont, and the northern part of the *Aegean* Sea, from Troas, and bounded on the south by Epirus and Thessaly, on the north by Dardania and Moesia, on the east by Thrace and the *Aegean* Sea, and on the west by

the Adriatic Sea, and Illyricum. It was distinguished as the kingdom of Philip and his son Alexander the Great, who, about three centuries before Christ, made himself master of almost all the then known world. But the overgrown empire was divided, after his death, by his ambitious generals; and Macedonia fell a prey, in process of time, to the conquests of the Romans under Paulus *Æmilius*.—*Come over, &c.*, i. e. come over and help us by preaching the gospel. Christianity had not yet been introduced into Europe; and the genius of the whole continent, and even of ages to come, the genius of vast multitudes of men seeking for light and peace, and finding none, appeared, as it were, in the person of that seeming Macedonian man, and asked for “help.” That word beautifully describes the chief office of the Christian religion, in its blessed influence upon the world. It is help, guidance, light. It is help to aid man in working out his own salvation; in being good, and doing good. It is not a substitute for his own exertions, but a quickener and director of them. It saves man by helping him save himself.

10. *We endeavored.* Or, “we adopted, or sought means.” By the use of the first person plural, the commentators infer that Luke now, for the first time, became attached to the party of Paul, and henceforth travelled with him, as is indicated, through most of the remainder of the *Acts*, by the sign of

11 Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course  
12 to Samothracia, and the next *day* to Neapolis; and from thence  
to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, *and*  
13 a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days. And  
on the Sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where  
prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto

the pronoun used above. A considerable portion of the history, therefore, is that of an eye and ear-witness. — *Assuredly gathering.* Or, inferring with great certainty.

11. *Loosing from.* A nautical term, “sailed away.” — *With a straight course.* Over the *Ægean* Sea, now the Archipelago. — *Samothracia.* Or, Samothrace. This was an island in the *Ægean*, about thirty miles in circumference. It was called Samothrace, or the Samos of Thrace, to distinguish it from other places of the same name. It was an asylum for criminals and adventurers. Its modern name is *Samandrachi*. — *Neapolis.* This was a seaport in Macedonia, or, according to some writers, in Thrace. Neapolis was not far from Philippi. Its present name is *Napoli*. It is situated between one and two hundred miles from Troas.

12. *Philippi.* This city was originally within the limits of ancient Thrace; but, being conquered by Philip, the father of Alexander the Great, he gave to it his own name. It was celebrated as the battle-field of Cesar against Pompey, and also, afterwards, of Antony and Augustus against Brutus and Cassius, in the first century before the advent of the Messiah. — *Which is the chief city.* Or, one of the chief cities, or the chief city which is a colony in that country. After Macedonia had been conquered by Paulus *Æmilius*, it was divided into four parts, and Philippi was one of the principal cities in Macedonia *Prima*, or the first part, though not the capital, for that was

Amphipolis, according to Livy. — *And a colony.* Or, more simply, without the conjunction, “a colony,” as it is put in apposition to Philippi. This fact, long standing unsupported by any evidence, has been unexpectedly corroborated by coins which have been discovered in later times. It appears, by their veracious testimony, that Julius Cesar planted a colony here, and granted high privileges to the place, which were afterwards augmented by gifts from Augustus, the succeeding emperor. There were colonies of different rank, according to the favors granted them, and called by different titles, as Roman, Latin, Italian, and military: — to which class Philippi belonged, is beyond our knowledge.

13. *By a river side, where prayer was wont to be made.* The name of the river is unknown, though it is conjectured to be the Strymon, or a branch of it. It was a Jewish practice to have oratories, or *proseuchæ*, or places of prayer, near some water, in order to be accommodated in the numerous ablutions which were connected with their religion. Thus Josephus remarks — and other ancient writers might be quoted to the same effect — that the city of Hali-carnassus decreed permission to the Jews to erect these edifices. “We ordain that the Jews who are willing, both men and women, do observe the Sabbaths; and perform sacred rites, according to the Jewish law; and build *proseuchæ* (or places for prayer) by the sea-side, according to the custom of their country; and if any man, whether magistrate or private

the women which resorted *thither*. And a certain woman named <sup>14</sup> Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard *us*: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when <sup>15</sup> she was baptized, and her household, she besought *us*, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my

person, give them any hinderance or disturbance, he shall pay a fine to the city." An early act of toleration.—*Sat down.* Took the position of public teachers.—*Women.* Who, perhaps, came at one hour, and the men at another, for the purposes of worship; or, probably, the services had not then commenced.

14. *Lydia.* Her name being derived, it is likely, from the country of her residence.—*A seller of purple.* Purple was a color of great cost and richness, which was made from a shell-fish, and garments colored with which were worn chiefly by the wealthy and powerful.—*Thyatira.* This was a city of Lydia, a province of Asia Minor, situated near Mysia, and now called *Ak-hisar*. It is remarkable, as furnishing an incidental proof to the veracity of the history here given, that an inscription has been discovered, in modern times, in the ruins of this city, which was made by the corporation of *dyers*, (it concludes with the word *dyers*,) in honor of a distinguished Roman, in the reign of Caracalla, by the name of Antonius Claudius Alphenus. Thus truth bears the test of ages, and finds strong confirmations in every discovery and research of the learned, because they often reveal circumstantial and undesigned coincidences.—*Which worshipped God.* Or, was a proselyte.—*Whose heart the Lord opened.* This is a Hebrew form of speech to describe what takes place in the course of divine providence, as if it were effected by a special instrumentality of Heaven. Thus the Lord was said to harden Pharaoh's

heart, Ex. x. 1, and to prompt David to number the people, 2 Sam. xxiv 1, though in neither case is the language to be taken literally, but figuratively. So profound and earnest was the piety of the Hebrews, that they associated God with every thing, and every thing with God, so that no philosophical line was ever drawn by them of the limits of human responsibility. In the case of Lydia, we recognize a soul already devout and well-disposed, a mind waiting and thirsting for higher and purer truth. This happy condition of spiritual interest is attributed to God, for he is the First Cause of all causes, the prime Agent and Mover of all; though there is still room left for the freedom of human choice, and for the guilt of grieving away, or the virtue of welcoming and cherishing, the Spirit of truth. In short, she was, under the grace and providence of God, converted from a state of spiritual blindness to light, and peace, and joy.

15. *She was baptized, and her household.* She submitted to the initiatory rite of Christian profession, agreeably to the commands of Christ, and the practice of the apostles. The fact that her household was also baptized certainly strengthens the idea that personal belief was not always a prerequisite to baptism; for, supposing there were no infants in the family, it would have been remarkable, indeed, if each household baptized, as that of Lydia, that of the jailer, ver. 33, and that of Crispus, chap. xviii. 8, 1 Cor. i. 14, and that of Stephanas, 1 Cor. i. 16, had been composed of adult persons, or those

16 house, and abide *there*: And she constrained us. — And it came to pass as we went to prayer, a certain damsel, possessed with a spirit of divination, met us, which brought her masters

arrived at years of discretion; and not only so, but that all these individuals believed simultaneously with the head of the family, and were baptized not only as households, agreeably to the custom of circumcision, and also agreeably to the custom of baptism among proselytes to Judaism, as Lightfoot has abundantly shown from the Talmuds, but were *all baptized as personal believers* in the gospel. Nevertheless, it is conceded, that it is matter of inference, whether the subjects of baptism, in this and the other cases, were young or old, or whether they were all believers or not; the only and the strong question being, on which side do probabilities incline, in favor or against infant baptism; and we believe they do decidedly in favor of that holy and beautiful rite; or, at least, that faith on the part of the subject of baptism was not an essential prerequisite in every instance. — *Come into my house.* She forthwith put her religion into exercise, by practising the Christian virtue of hospitality, so important, and so often enjoined at that period. Phil. iv. 3; Heb. xiii. 2; 1 Peter iv. 9; Mat. x. 40–42.

16. *As we went to prayer.* Or, to the place of prayer, or oratory; on another occasion from that last related. — *A certain damsel.* Or, female servant or slave. — *Possessed with a spirit of divination.* Or, as the original and margin read, “with a spirit of Python.” This is a classical allusion to the ancient mythology. Python was a serpent or dragon, fabled to have been killed by Apollo, to whom the name also of the monster was transferred, and he was called the Pythian Apollo. Hence diviners and soothsayers were called

by the same name, as the priestesses in the temple of Apollo were believed to be inspired by the god, and to utter oracles when in the state of enthusiasm and ecstasy. This popular term was adopted by the sacred writer, without, of course, endorsing the truth or error of that belief of the Gentile world. The language of the times was used — the modes of speech, the idioms, the phrases, — because that was the only language which could be understood by the generality. The girl in question was probably melancholy or insane, which gave rise to the idea that she was possessed with a different spirit from her own. Her owners readily turned her disease to an account, and employed her, for the purpose of gain, as a *diviner* of future events, or a *soothsayer*, or fortune-teller. It is not incredible that many were easily imposed upon in that age of ignorance and superstition, when, even at this day, there are thousands that can be duped by any impostor or fanatic who possesses cunning and address. She was, perhaps, sincere in the belief that she was really possessed by the spirit of the Pythian god; as the priestess of Apollo at Delphos was affected, probably, by the mephitic gas which arose from the earth where the tripod, on which she sat, was placed. It has been the opinion of some critics, that this woman was also a *ventriloquist*, or one who could utter sounds from the breast, without any perceptible motion of the lips. — *Much gain.* The credulity of the people was great, and they paid large sums, without complaint, for her services; and it was the loss of this gain that maddened her owners against the apostles.

much gain by soothsaying: the same followed Paul and us, and I cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour. — And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew *them* into the market-place unto the

17. *These men are the servants, &c.* She had heard them preach, and knew their claims, and it was perfectly in character with a wandering mind, to repeat over and over again the principal strain and burden of their mission, "that they were the messengers of God, and had come to point out the way of salvation to the people." This trait of the insane is often seen in every age. They seize the current news, and give it publicity, or boldly assert something which the prudence of the sane would shrink from uttering. See note on Mat. viii. 29. While, on the other hand, as remarked by Farmer, "the honorable testimony she bore to Paul could not be the effect of the spirit of Python or Apollo, because it tended to disparage himself and the whole tribe of heathen deities. If you say it was the devil who bore this testimony to Paul, you will find it more difficult still to account for this zeal for truth in the father of lies; because this testimony, as it would appear to proceed from one of their own gods, would have great weight with the Gentiles. Nor was any evil spirit *constrained* to bear this testimony to Paul; for the apostle was grieved at it, and, in order to put a stop to it, cured her disorder."

18. *This did she many days.* Here was another decided indication of insanity. She was possessed with what is technically called "a fixed idea," which led her to follow them from day to day, and reiterate the

same expression. The insane often pursue one object without its being possible to divert their minds from it. — *Being grieved*, i. e. because he saw her sad state, and the miserable tool she was made by the craft of her owners, to dupe the credulous and superstitious. — *To come out of her.* The apostle speaks to her in her existing state of mind, and, in order to confirm the cure which was miraculously wrought, he exorcises the supposed spirit of divination. The same method was pursued by Christ himself. See note on Mat. viii. 32. — *He came out, &c.* By which figurative expression, the departure of the disease is described. Paul restored her to her right mind, and she ceased to follow them with her maniacal cries. The superstition was very prevalent in the heathen world, that insanity was not a lower, but a higher, state of the human faculties; and deference was paid to the deranged, as if they were in correspondence with the gods, and knew more of the future, and the destinies of men, than ordinary mortals. Such was the ignorance and want of science among the great mass of men, that they could be easily imposed upon by these pretended diviners and soothsayers. When, accordingly, Paul restored the girl to her right reason, the spell was broken, and her masters could no longer use her as an instrument for making money.

19, 20. *The hope of their gains has gone.* As observed by critics,

20 rulers, and brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, 21 being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, and teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being 22 Romans. And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to

there is a paronomasia, or play upon words, in the original, which is lost in our version, for the same verb is here used as that in the preceding verse, which describes the departure of the disease; when her insanity *came out*, or *departed*, the hope of her masters' gains *departed* likewise.—*Caught Paul and Silas*, i. e. laid violent hands on them as criminals.—*The market-place*. Or, forum, where not only merchandise was exposed for sale, but public assemblies and trials were held.—*The rulers*. Or, civil magistrates, who, in Roman colonies, were called *duumviri*, or *prætors*.—*To the magistrates*. The same officers, according to Rosenmuller, Kuinoel, Bloomfield, and others, as those called rulers above—the latter being a general, the former a specific, term.—*Being Jews*. This was artfully thrown in to excite an odium against the apostles; for the Jews were universally held in disrepute throughout the Roman world, and though tolerated in their religion, were subjected to many civil disabilities.—*Do exceedingly trouble our city*. They professed great anxiety for the welfare of the community, though the secret spring of their hostility was the loss of their gains. Chap. xix. 24—27. “The love of money is the root of all evil;” and scarcely can a Christian reformation of the corrupt habits and institutions of society proceed, in any age, a single step, without coming in conflict with this mighty motive of human conduct. The progress of temperance, human freedom, honesty, purity, and every other good cause, by which Christianity is

brought into practical operation, and domesticated, so to speak, among the homes and business of men, encounters no foe more formidable, universal, or obstinate, than the love of gain, however unrighteously acquired.

21. *Customs which are not lawful*, &c. Referring to the doctrines, religious services, and worship, inculcated by the apostles, at which these men professed to be very much alarmed, as trespassing both upon law and order. Ver. 20. The Romans tolerated other religions, where they did not interfere with their own; but it was an ancient law, that the people should “neither worship new gods, nor the gods of other countries, but those of their own.” Servius says, that “care was taken, both among the Athenians and the Romans, that no one should introduce new religions; on which account Socrates was condemned, and the Chaldeans, or Jews, driven from Rome.” Cicero states the law, that “no person shall have any separate gods, or new ones, nor shall he privately worship any strange gods, unless they be publicly allowed.” Tertullian also mentions “a decree, that no god should be consecrated, unless approved by the senate.” The adroitness of “the masters” in criminating the preachers of the gospel with teaching a new religion, is now apparent; for they ostensibly exhibited them in plain opposition to the law of the empire, and enlisted public sentiment against them on that behalf.—*Being Romans*. As by way of contrast with Paul and Silas, who were Jews. Ver. 20.

22. *Rent off their clothes*. Caused

beat *them*. And when they had laid many stripes upon them, 23 they cast *them* into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely. Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into 24 the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. — And 25 at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great 26 earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's

the clothes of the apostles to be rent off, or actually stripped them off themselves in a paroxysm of anger. It was customary, both among the Jews and Romans, for persons who were beaten to have their clothes violently torn off, without any regard to their preservation. — *To beat them*. The original is, “to beat with rods.” The subordinate officers that inflicted this punishment were called *lictors*, who were kept constantly in attendance by Roman magistrates. 2 Cor. xi. 23, 25.

23, 24. *Had laid many stripes upon them*. The Jews are accustomed to inflict only thirty-nine stripes, but the Romans were not limited by any humane restriction. Paul, perhaps, refers to this occasion in 2 Cor. xi. 23, where he speaks of himself “in stripes above measure.” Their punishment, thus far, was illegal, as no examination or trial had been held. — *To keep them safely*. As prisoners of consequence, who, they were aware, perhaps, might escape by means of their superhuman power. Chap. xii. 7 — 11. — *Into the inner prison*. For the sake of greater security. — *Made their feet fast in the stocks*. This was a wooden machine for confining prisoners in uneasy and painful positions; which contained openings for the feet, and sometimes, also, for the arms and neck. After being severely beaten, and their wounds remaining undressed, ver. 33, this close and painful confinement would be doubly agonizing. 1 Thes. ii. 2.

25. *At midnight*. On account of their great sufferings of body, they were probably unable, like Peter, chap. xii. 6, to sleep; but remained awake, and passed the weary hours in supplications and songs to Heaven. — *The prisoners heard them*. The sounds were so unusual in those gloomy abodes, that they arrested the attention of the prisoners. Every statement in this verse conveys a new and individual impression. It was at midnight, when the rest of the world were sleeping, that Paul and Silas, with wounds still bleeding, and limbs painfully confined, so far from indulging in complaints, pray to God for strength to support them under their trials, and sing songs of praise that they were accounted worthy to suffer in so glorious a cause. Animated by the joyful and inspiring nature of the religion for which they endured so much, they lifted up their voices on high until the prison resounded with their “hymns of lofty cheer,” and the poor victims of sin and suffering, incarcerated with them, heard the glad strains, and thrilled with emotion at such new and strange harmony within walls echoing only to groans and sighs. “The darkness, the stillness, the loneliness, all give sublimity to the scene, and teach us how invaluable is the privilege of access to the throne of mercy, in this suffering world.”

26. *A great earthquake*. A manifestation of the divine power and aid often vouchsafed before. Chap. iv

27 bands were loosed. And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, 28 29 Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before 30 Paul and Silas; and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must

31, v. 19, xii. 6, 7. — *All the doors — every one's bands, &c.* All the prisoners, apparently, were set at liberty. These effects could scarcely have been produced by a mere natural earthquake.

27 — 29. *Would have killed himself.* He was held responsible for the safe-keeping of his charge; and, seeing his prison-doors thrown open by the earthquake, which awoke him out of sleep, he instantly inferred their escape, and that his own life was forfeited. Chap. xii. 19. He was prompted by terror at once to kill himself, by falling on the point of his sword. Of course he would not have thought of perpetrating such an act, so suddenly, unless previously educated in the maxims of that day, by which it was accounted right to commit suicide. Thus Cato perished at Utica; and thus, in this very place of Philippi, Brutus and Cassius, after their defeat by Antony and Augustus, fell on their swords, together with numbers of their friends. What a contrast between the spirit of heathenism and the spirit of Christianity! — between the jailer, about to throw his life away rashly and needlessly, and the apostles, who attached a true value to existence as the gift of God, and bore the rods of the lictor, the gloom of the dungeon, and the distress of the stocks, with unterrified, even with prayerful and jubilant, spirits; and, though danger and death are before them,

Of heart or hope; but still bear up, and steer Right onward.<sup>33</sup>

— *Do thyself no harm.* Commit not evil against thyself; lay no hand of death on thine own body. The precept, though specially designed against self-murder, is of wide application; for there are many modes of suicide, some quicker and others slower. We ought to indulge in no habit, or practice, which mars the wondrous constitution of body and soul, that combined masterpiece of the creation, that link between two worlds, "half dust, half deity." Excesses of mind and body, violations of the natural laws, whatever leads to sickness or to sin, comes under the apostolic prohibition. — *Trembling, and fall down, &c.* He prostrated himself before those whom, but a short time previous, he had loaded with every indignity and cruelty.

30. *Brought them out.* From the inner prison, into which they had been thrust at first. Ver. 24. — *Sirs.* A title of respect. — *What must I do to be saved?* There are two theories of expounding this question; one, that he inquires respecting his present safety; the other, that he asks the way of eternal salvation. But if we will consider that the jailer was a heathen, — that he was in great temporal fear and agitation, — that the earthquake had convinced him of the high and perhaps superhuman character of his prisoners, — and that the rumors of their teaching the way of salvation had probably reached his ears before this time, we shall

“ Yet arguo not  
Against Heaven's hand or will, nor hate a jot

I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus <sup>31</sup> Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake <sup>32</sup> unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed <sup>33</sup> their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And <sup>34</sup>

see that his mind was, so to say, not in a simple, but a complex, state. Various feelings and anxieties were struggling in his breast for utterance. He was full of contending emotions, and he poured them all out in that one bursting ejaculation, that prayer for help, that supplication of the whole soul: "What shall I do? how shall I be saved? is there any help for me?" He had reference to eternal salvation, in all likelihood, but not to that alone; he was stricken to the heart by *all* this sudden and mighty manifestation of God — this amazing miracle, which had shaken the prison to the foundation, and bidden every door fly open, and every chain and fetter fall. He felt that he had exposed himself to the anger of some high power above him; and his question was the result of all these various feelings united — partly colored by his dread of the temporal penalty hanging over him, if his prisoners escaped, partly by what he had heard of the apostles' teaching the way of salvation, and partly by the tremendous display that rushed upon his senses, when he awoke from sleep, of the working of a more than mortal hand upon every prison bolt and bar. To identify the question of this dim, agitated, frantic, pagan mind, at the hour of midnight, amid such a scene of outward confusion, and a moment before bent upon suicide, with the inquiry of one at the present day, educated amid the reflected, if not received, light of the gospel respecting his future and eternal state of blessedness hereafter, is to confound, in one, very dissimilar states of mind. Though the question it-

self is the greatest one which man can ask, or God answer — the question of questions, the grand prayer and yearning of the immortal soul.

*31, 32 Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.* Or, in the paraphrase of Bloomfield, "embrace the Christian religion, i. e. so as to obey it, and thou and all thy family shall attain salvation." Faith in Christ is put for the reception of the whole religion of which he was the Author and Finisher. Faith is the first step; because the use of means, the application of the truth, the seeking for aid, and obedience to the Christian precepts, are all dependent upon confidence reposed in Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God, the Saviour of the soul. And it is the want of faith — a living, personal conviction, and sense of trust in him — which weakens men's hearts, and yields them up as victims to temptation. Confidence in Jesus as a divine Guide and Helper to the sinner, is the Alpha and Omega of religion. For, where it really exists, it can hardly fail to lead to good works, and every virtue and grace; since it establishes, as it were, a living chain of communication between earth and heaven, man and God, the soul, and the fountain of life and light which can fill and satisfy it. — *Spake unto him the word of the Lord,* i. e. discoursed of the doctrine of the Lord, and explained more fully its duties and promises. This he did, not only to the jailer, but pointed out to his whole household the way of salvation.

*33, 34. Washed their stripes.* "Mercy before sacrifice." He first performed an act of pressing need to

when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house. —

35 And when it was day, the magistrates sent the sergeants, saying,

36 Let those men go. And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, The magistrates have sent to let you go: now

37 therefore depart, and go in peace. But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily?

38 nay, verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out. And

the wounded apostles, whose stripes had been neglected before, and he was afterwards baptized. How differently he looked upon those bleeding wounds, when his spiritual eye was opened, and he saw that they were the wounds of brethren, and when, before, he deemed Paul and Silas as mere seditious Jews, who deserved no better fate. — *Was baptized, he and all his, straightway.* See remarks on ver. 15. The rite was performed immediately, and, in all probability, by sprinkling or affusion, not by immersion; for there were but few accommodations for the latter in a prison or its purlieus. — *Brought them into his house.* From the prison. — *And rejoiced.* The natural rebound of his feelings, after such fear and remorse, was joy. Religion is happiness.

35, 36. *The sergeants.* The inferior officers in attendance, who carried rods and an axe, and were called *lictors*. The earthquake and the transactions of the night had not been in vain in their effects upon the rulers of Philippi. — *Depart, and go in peace.* They probably supposed that the apostles would gladly seize the opportunity and depart, but they mistook the spirit of the men and their cause.

37. *Beaten us, &c.* Every circumstance of aggravation is introduced, to show the subject in its true light. They had been beaten, beaten openly, without having been tried

or condemned, which was a violation of general law; and all this, though they were Romans — Paul, at least, being free-born; while, to cap the whole, they had been thrust into prison and bound in the stocks. These things were a flat violation of the Valerian law, which forbade a Roman citizen being bound, — and of the Sempronian or Porcian law, which exempted him from being punished with rods. For to say, “I am a Roman citizen,” was a bulwark of defence in every part of the earth. Here was a complication of injustice, a tissue of mal-administration, not to be winked out of sight. — *Thrust us out privily?* They were mean as well as cruel. They had not only proceeded in this high-handed manner, but, when they saw their error, they wished to cover it up, and let it pass quietly by, instead of frankly confessing the wrong, and yielding reparation, or at least asking pardon for their misconduct. But Paul stood upon his rights, and demanded a satisfactory acknowledgment, which he finally obtained. The high-toned spirit which he exhibited was not inconsistent with the meekness and humility of the Christian character, and would command, more likely, the respect of the people for the remaining brethren of the church.

38, 39. *They feared, &c.* They knew how flagrant was the offence against the majesty of Rome, to beat and imprison her citizens without a

the sergeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared when they heard that they were Romans. And they came <sup>39</sup> and besought them, and brought *them* out, and desired *them* to depart out of the city. And they went out of the prison, and <sup>40</sup> entered into *the house of Lydia*: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.

## CHAPTER XVII.

*The Persecution of Paul in Macedonia, and his Discourse at Athens.*

NOW when they had passed through Amphipolis, and Apollo-nia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the

hearing. They trembled for the consequences, and came and humbled themselves before those very men whom, a short time previous, they had mangled, and insulted with wanton cruelty. Such are some of the wonderful contrasts of this remarkable history. — *Came* — *besought* — *brought* — *and desired*. A reduplication of terms, to describe the great pains and earnest entreaty of the magistrates, that the apostles would go from the prison and the city peacefully, and overlook the injustice of their conduct.

40. *House of Lydia.* See ver. 15. — *Comforted them*, i. e. in view of the dangers and tribulations around them; which, however, the interposing mercy of God would scatter, as he had dissipated the black cloud which lately threatened their entire destruction — but which, as it was now passed, they saw spanned with the bow of promise, and radiant with immortal beauty and hope.

There are many things in this chapter worthy of serious study and personal application; for here are true sketches of human nature, on one side, and the shining of the blessed truths of the gospel, on the other. But there is one point that should be singled out, and deeply pondered, for it is the essential of

Christianity. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.” Ver. 31. This is a subject for a sermon, for a volume. How simple this early faith, yet how sufficient! Perish creeds, perish confessions of faith, and let the church universal fear not to cast herself on this Rock of Ages, this primitive foundation! This was the adequate creed of Peter, of Martha, of the lame man, of the eunuch, of Lydia, and of the jailer. It can fill our souls, as it filled and satisfied theirs. Then would peace descend and dwell among the churches of God, and there would be “one body, and one spirit; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

## CHAPTER XVII.

1. *Amphipolis.* This was the chief town in the southern region of Macedonia, and was situated on the River Strymon, at no great distance from its entrance into the *Ægean Sea*. It derived its name, which signifies *around the city*, from the circumstance of the river flowing around it, and forming a peninsula, or, as others say, an island. It was, originally, a colony of the Athenians, and occasioned many difficulties between that nation and the Spartans.

2 Jews. And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, 3 opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead ; and that this Jesus, whom I preach 4 unto you, is Christ. And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas : and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, 5 and of the chief women not a few. — But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought

In the middle ages it was styled *Chrysopolis*, or the golden city. A town still exists upon the ancient site, under the name of *Empoli*, or *Yamboli*. — *Apollonia*. This city was also on the route from Philippi to Thessalonica. It was a colony formed by the Corinthians, and a place of considerable trade. — *Thessalonica*. This was the capital of the second district, under the four-fold division of Macedonia by the Romans, and was the principal place of the whole country, as it was the residence of the Roman governor, or proconsul. It lay about 20 miles south-west of Philippi, at the head of the Thermaic Gulf, which extends up from the *Egean* Sea, and was anciently called *Therma*, but changed its name either in honor of Thessalonica, the daughter of Philip, or on account of the victory over the Thessalians by that king. Two of the epistles of Paul were directed to the church founded there. Its present name is *Saloniki*. — *A synagogue*. Literally, *the synagogue*, i. e. according to Winer, the only synagogue of the place, or, as others contend, of that region.

2, 3. *As his manner was*. Luke iv. 16. Both Jesus and his apostles preached the gospel in the Jewish synagogues. Acts ix. 20, xiii. 5, 14. — *Reasoned*. Discoursed. — *The Scriptures*, i. e. the Hebrew Scrip-

tures. — *Opening*. Or, explaining, unfolding. — *Suffered*. It was predicted that the Messiah would be a sufferer, as well as conqueror, Luke xxiv. 27, 45, though the crucifixion of our Lord was then, as it is now, a great stumbling-block in the way of the Jews believing in him. — *Christ*, should be, *the Christ*.

4, 5. *Consorted with Paul and Silas*. Or, became their adherents. Luke and Timothy had probably remained behind at Philippi, for the first person, indicating the presence of Luke in the company of Paul, occurs not again until chap. xx. 5. — *Devout Greeks*, i. e. heathen partly Judaized, though not perhaps proselytes in full ; and also, as is likely, those who were idolaters. 1 Thes. i. 9. — *Chief women*. Or, women of rank. — *Moved with envy*. At the success of the apostles. This vice has been ever a great obstacle to the progress of truth and righteousness. It excited the Jews to crucify the Master, and it hunted the apostles to prison and to death. Mat. xxvii. 18 ; Acts xiii. 45. — *Lewd fellows of the baser sort*. Rather, “ wicked or vile men of those frequenting the market,” by which are meant the idlers or loungers in the public places of the city ; the rabble. The Jews were willing to descend to any instruments, however mean and contemptible, to effect their bad purpose. — *Jason*.

to bring them out to the people. And when they found them 6 not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down, are come hither also; whom Jason hath received: and these all do 7 contrary to the decrees of Cesar, saying, that there is another king, *one* Jesus. And they troubled the people, and the rulers 8 of the city, when they heard these things. And when they had 9 taken security of Jason and of the other, they let them go. —

And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night 10 unto Berea: who coming *thither*, went into the synagogue of the

Who was a kinsman of Paul, Rom. xvi. 21, and entertained him and his company at his own house. — *To the people*, i. e. to a popular assembly, which should pronounce upon their alleged crime.

6. *Found them not.* As they had probably learnt their danger, and fled to a place of security. — *That have turned the world upside down.* Chap. xvi. 20. The turmoil at Philippi, produced by the opposition of the Jews to the preaching of the gospel, had been reported at Thessalonica. Thus the charge of agitation and disturbance was then, as it is now, laid at the door of those who seek to promote the cause of reformation and righteousness, though it belongs in reality to those who cling to old errors, corrupt institutions and customs, and forswear improvement. As has been truly and keenly said by Pierpont, “To bring peace, Christ knew that he must first bring ‘division’ and a ‘sword.’ His first apostles were charged with ‘turning the world upside down.’ They meant to do so; for they found the world wrong-side up. To a great extent, it is so still; for the work of the apostles, of Jesus, and of his gospel, is not yet finished.”

7. *Hath received*; i. e. entertained as guests. — *To the decrees of Cesar.* It was the law of Rome, both under the republican and the imperial gov-

ernment, that no one should be styled *king* in any of the subject provinces, except by express permission. Claudius Cesar sat at this time on the throne. — *That there is another king, one Jesus.* Or, better, as in the original, simply, “Jesus.” The apostles were charged with high treason against the crown. The artfulness with which the Jews alleged this crime, resembled the crimination of the Saviour himself. Luke xxiii. 2. They do not assign any violation of religion, but feign a political offence, to which the Gentile magistrates would, of course, be more sensitive. The only sense in which Paul pressed the claims of Jesus as a king was a figurative one, but capable of being perverted by the malice of his enemies. Christ *was* a king, but “his kingdom was not of this world.” John xviii. 36.

8-10. *Troubled the people, and the rulers.* They were alarmed at such a charge, as ominous of civil revolution and ruin to their city; for Rome was jealous of her power, and terrible in her vengeance. — *Had taken security.* Or, as we should say, had admitted them to bail, or put them under bonds to keep the peace, or to be responsible for the conduct of Paul and Silas. — *The other.* It should not be singular, but plural, “the others.” Ver. 6. — *Berea.* This town was 35 or 40 miles

- 11 Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.  
 12 Therefore many of them believed; also of honorable women

west of Thessalonica, on the River Astreus, near Mount Bermius, and about 30 miles from Pella, the birth-place of Alexander the Great, B. C. 355. It afterwards went under the name of *Irenopolis*, and is now called, by the Turks, from its old designation, *Boor*, but by others, *Caria Veria*. — *Synagogue*. See note on ver. 2.

11. *More noble*. The primary sense of the words is, “better born,” or, “of a higher rank,” but here, metaphorically, “of a nobler, more ingenuous disposition.” Candor, diligence in seeking after truth, superiority to old, but ill-founded prejudices, are indeed noble traits, though they are seldom estimated according to their just and high value. — *Searched the Scriptures daily*. Their nobleness of mind was evinced by their openness in receiving the truth, and the care they took to investigate the subject by the standard, not of human opinions, but of the Scriptures. They were willing to take some pains to search and investigate, and not condemn the apostles unheard. Such an example should challenge the admiration and imitation of the world. Its value is inestimable. For it ought to be known and felt, that not the scoffer, nor skeptic, but the inquirer and the believer, pursue the really noble and magnanimous course. If men scorn and rail at religion, it is because they do not know what it is; they have mistaken some poor human caricature for the matchless and glowing original. They have drank from the muddy streams, not at the crystal fountain. They have studied creeds, not the Bible. It is a most melancholy, but instructive, fact, that

several of the chiefs of infidelity have confessed that *they had not even read* the whole of that sacred book, upon which they poured out their venomous abuse! There is emphasis, too, in the word *daily*. The Bereans did not pursue their biblical studies with such long intervals intervening as to lose the thread of interest and thought, but daily resumed the blessed task. We know that the mariner daily takes his reckoning on the bosom of the mighty ocean, to descry which way its winds and waves are bearing his frail bark; and that the traveller daily consults his guide-book, to ascertain his way, and steer to his destination. The Bible is our guide-book, our practical navigator on the infinite voyage, in the heaven-bound journey. O, mortal — poor, weak, sinning child of earth — often turn to its celestial guidance, daily consult its earnest, affectionate counsels! Let the angel of its twofold covenant wrestle, morning and evening, with your soul, and not depart without leaving his blessing behind.

12. *Therefore many of them believed, &c.* The natural consequence of so much candor and faithful inquiry. The Bible only needs to be known, to be believed; religion only asks to be tried, to be loved and obeyed. — *Honorable women*. Unlike the women of rank and extensive influence in Antioch, in Pisidia, chap. xiii. 50, the Bereans espoused the truly noble and honorable part. The power which wealthy, cultivated women, of high station in society, are capable of exerting, is immense, and it becomes them to remember the greatness of their responsibility, and

which were Greeks, and of men not a few. But when the Jews 13 of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people. And then immediately the brethren sent away 14 Paul, to go as it were to the sea: but Silas and Timotheus abode there still. And they that conducted Paul brought him unto 15 Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed, they departed.

Now, while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was 16 stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.

the vast impetus they can impart to social and philanthropic improvements.

13, 14. *Stirred up the people.* Excited a popular commotion. The verb contains a figure, as it is derived from a word signifying the surge of the sea. The evil-minded emissaries from Thessalonica had aroused a tumult like a tempest upon the sea. — *To go as it were to the sea.* Or, correctly rendered, to go toward the sea. The original does not necessarily mean that any feint or stratagem was used; but may simply refer, as the usage of Greek writers shows, to the *direction* he was about to take. The principal brunt of the persecution was against Paul. Silas and Timothy are permitted to remain in peace, and water what Paul had planted. The apostle naturally went to the seaport nearest to Berea, Pydnon, which was upon the Thermaic Gulf, running up from the Ægean Sea; but it is doubtful whether he finally took his journey to Athens by land or by sea.

15. *Athens.* The capital of Attica, one of the districts of Greece, about 250 miles south-easterly from Berea. It was, originally, an Egyptian colony, under Cecrops, and received its name from *Athena*, the Greek name of the goddess Minerva, its tutelary divinity, the ruins of whose beautiful temple, called the *Parthenon*, are

still extant. This city was called “the eye of Greece, the inventor of letters, the light of the civilized world,” so brilliant was its career in arts, arms, literature, and government. Its poets, orators, warriors, philosophers, and statesmen, have been the praise and wonder of ages. The city of Socrates, and Plato, and Aristotle, and Demosthenes, never can be forgotten. The ruins of its temples, and other works of art, still astonish the traveller by their beauty and magnificence. Like other cities of the eastern world, it has been the sport of war, tyranny, and ruin. But it is now the capital of the new kingdom of Greece, under Otho, and, by the genial influence of civilization and Christianity, it may rise from ages of barbarism to more than its ancient glory.

16. *His spirit was stirred in him.* His mind was excited to mingled indignation and compassion at the spectacle of so much folly and superstition. — *Wholly given to idolatry.* Or, full of idols, as in the margin. With respect to the historical fact here stated, the voice of ancient writers is unanimous in agreeing with the sacred record. Thus Pausanias says, that “it had more images than all the rest of Greece.” Josephus remarks, that “the Athenians are the most pious of all the Grecians.” Elian called Athens “the altar of

17 Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met 18 with him. Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the

Greece." Philostratus observes that "it was the part of prudence to speak well of all the divinities, especially at Athens, where there were altars to the unknown gods." And Petronius, a Roman satirist, contemporary with Paul, uttered the sarcasm that "this city was so full of deities, that it is easier to find a god than a man." In short, there was no city on the face of the globe, in which heathenism had more concentrated all that was rich, magnificent, and seductive. It was the focus of idolatry, which had there arrayed itself with whatever of grace, beauty, and fascination, could be yielded by the combined genius of painting, sculpture, architecture, philosophy, and poetry. And the inability of man, without revelation, to attain to the highest personal and social good, and to be virtuous and happy, was nowhere more clearly demonstrated than in the splendid, but corrupt, cities of antiquity, like Athens, Corinth, and Rome.

17, 18. *The devout persons.* Either proselytes to Judaism, or Gentiles religiously inclined.—*In the market daily.* It was customary in Athens for the philosophers to teach their doctrines in frequented places, in the groves and porticoes of the city.—*Epicureans.* So called from *Epicurus*, a celebrated Athenian philosopher, who flourished about 300 years before Christ. He taught that pleasure was the *summum bonum*, or greatest good of life, though not such as arose from sensual indulgences, but the gratifications of the mind, and the enjoyments of a virtuous and contented disposition. He is said to

have passed a pure and exemplary life; but his followers perverted his doctrines into a license of sensual pleasures, so that the term *Epicurean* is now used proverbially to describe a voluptuary. Paul, in his address, referred to this system, which denied the creation of the world by God; excluded divine Providence, and limited the existence of man to the present state.—*Stoics.* This sect of philosophy derived its name from *stoa*, a porch, or portico, where its doctrines were taught by Zeno, a native of Cyprus, who flourished about the same period as Epicurus. This sect held that God had made the world, which was under the dominion of necessity; that happiness lay in virtue, and that virtue was its own reward; that all virtues were bound in one, and all vices equal. The Stoicks taught a lofty insensibility to pain, that pleasure and pain were the same, and that all passions and affections were to be studiously suppressed, and the mind kept in an unruffled calm. To the leading doctrines of this sect, also, the apostle refers, at least indirectly. In modern representations both of the system of Epicurus and of Zeno, great injustice has been done to their original doctrines. For "they were both right, and both wrong; for Christianity shows us that virtue and happiness, one and indissoluble, constitute the highest and only good, and the proper end and aim of being."—*Encountered.* Or, disputed with him.—*This babbler.* Literally, this picker-up of seeds, this trifler.—*Setter forth.* Or, "an announcer, or preacher."—*Strange*

resurrection. And they took him, and brought him unto Areo- 19 pagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? For thou bringest certain strange things to 20 our ears; we would know therefore what these things mean. (For all the Athenians, and strangers which were there, spent 21 their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.) — Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars-hill, and said, 22

gods. Or, new, or foreign, demons or divinities, such as the heathen worshipped; which were often men, deified after their death. They probably understood Paul as introducing two new deities; one of them *Jesus*, and the other the *resurrection*, which was of the feminine gender in Greek, and might have been deemed a new goddess to be worshipped. Thus, Modesty, Desire, Fame, Piety, had altars erected to their worship in Greece. The introduction of new gods into their mythology was a matter demanding grave consideration, — endangering, as it might, the adoration paid to their established divinities.

19-21. *Areopagus*. Translated or explained as "Mars-hill," ver. 22. This was a rocky eminence in the city, on which the court, called the tribunal of Areopagus, instituted by Solon, was held; "the most honorable and the most holy tribunal of all Greece." The name was derived from the fable, that Ares, Mars, was arraigned here, and tried before the gods for the murder of a son of Neptune, and hence it was called Mars-hill; and the members of the court were styled *Areopagites*. Ver. 34. It sat in the open air, by night, upon stone seats, and was distinguished for its impartiality and gravity; so that foreign states resorted to it as an umpire. But, in Paul's case, there was apparently no judicial proceeding, but only a popular address delivered there because it was a more convenient and grave a place for the

discussion of such matters. — *What this new doctrine, &c.* Mark i. 27. Their curiosity, rather than their piety, was excited; but they were candid, to hearken to whatever reasoning he might offer. — *Certain strange things.* The gospel was to them but a new philosophical theory; and they inquired respecting it rather as amateurs in speculation, not as moral agents, as sinners, who had an interest of life and death at stake. — *And strangers.* Many resorted to Athens, as the seat of the fine arts, belles-lettres, and philosophy, to obtain their education. Most of the great men of Rome studied, in their youth, at this city. — *Some new thing.* This characteristic of the Athenians is corroborated by the ancient authors. Thus Demosthenes describes the Athenians as "inquiring, in the place of public resort, if there are any news." Thucydides also speaks of them as "excellent in suffering themselves to be deceived by novelty of speech." And an ancient commentator of this passage remarks that Thucydides here blames "the Athenians, who made it their only business to tell and hear something that was new." And Meussius has stated, there were more than three hundred news-resorts in Athens. Thus do we invariably find sacred history substantiated by many incidental and direct proofs from heathen writers.

22. *Stood in the midst of Mars-hill.* Or, to preserve uniformity of rendering with ver. 19, "Areopagus." In this place "the Christian leader

**Ye** men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.

takes his stand, surrounded on every side with whatever was noble, beautiful, and intellectual, in the older world — temples, statues, public edifices, and the walks of the philosophers. It was in the midst of these elevating associations, to which the student of Grecian literature in Tarsus, the reader of Menander and of the Greek philosophical poets, could scarcely be entirely dead or ignorant, that Paul stands forth to proclaim the lowly, yet authoritative, religion of Jesus of Nazareth. Probably, only the heads of Paul's discourse are preserved by Luke. — *Ye men of Athens.* The classical designation. — *Too superstitious.* An unhappy translation, which exhibits the apostle as ignorant of human nature, and destitute of that tone of conciliation and decorum, at the opening of his discourse, which is an essential rule in all oratory, sacred or secular. The literal sense of the adjective is "god-fearing," and Paul uses the comparative degree, "more god-fearing," i. e. than others; or, in freer terms, very religiously inclined, much devoted to the worship of the gods. Instead of an abrupt and harsh rebuke at the onset, "he begins with acknowledging, in a laudatory manner, the strength of the religious sentiment among the Athenians, and adducing, as a proof of it, that, while walking amongst their sacred edifices, he lighted on an altar dedicated to an unknown god." A similar mistranslation to the present one occurs in chap. xxv. 19, where, instead of "superstition," we ought to read *religion*. Would it not be well for the modern Christian missionary to adopt

more of the matter and manner of Paul's discourse at Athens, than to make the peculiar dogmas of his sect the prominent topics of address?

23. *Your devotions.* The term is more general, and signifies "your objects of worship" and veneration, as gods, altars, temples. — *To the unknown god.* The critics cite various ancient authors in confirmation of this inscription mentioned by Paul. Diogenes Laertius speaks of "there being found, in his day, in the broughs of the Athenians, anonymous altars," erected on the occasion of the city being delivered from the pestilence. Pausanias wrote that "nigh unto the altar of Jupiter Olympius was an altar of unknown gods." Philostratus refers to the same fact; and the author of Philopatris uses the form of an oath, "I swear by the unknown (gods) at Athens;" and again, "We have found and worshipped the unknown (god) at Athens, and we will give thanks to him." The apostle appropriately adduces this striking fact, as showing that they were very religiously disposed. It is the conjecture of Eichhorn that, "When inscriptions upon some of the most ancient altars became effaced by time, and it was not known to whom they were dedicated, a fresh inscription was made to an unknown god." — *Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, &c.* The apostle ingeniously, but fairly, identifies the God whom he preached with the God whom they ignorantly adored, and to whom they had erected an altar. He also happily took advantage of this incidental confession of their ignorance, as if to justify himself for what was so great presumption in

God, that made the world, and all things therein, seeing that he 24 is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he 25 needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to 26 dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times

their eyes—an itinerant Jew undertaking to instruct the mighty masters of Grecian philosophy. 1 Cor. i. 22-25. By the laws of Athens, it was death to introduce new gods, without the sanction of the tribunal of the Areopagus.

24, 25. *Made the world, &c.* The apostle exhibits the Deity, neither as an idle being, of human shape, according to the Epicureans, nor as a mere soul of the world, according to the Stoicks; but as an intelligent Spirit, superior to his works. He also conflicted with the Stoic doctrine, that matter was eternal; since he predicates of the world a creation within time. Rosenmuller observes that "Paul, with consummate art, so tempers his address, as now to contend on the side of the vulgar, against the philosopher, and now on the side of the philosopher, against the people,—and yet, again, against both parties."—*Dwelleth not in temples.* 1 Kings viii. 27; Is. lxvi. 1. The aptness of this remark will be best appreciated, when it is remembered that Paul stood in the midst of a city full of heathen temples, altars, statues, and sacrifices,—the very metropolis of polytheism, from which the fumes of incense were constantly rising to heaven. The sublimity of the simple annunciation of the nature and worship of the true God, will be best felt when the circumstances under which Paul spoke are taken into consideration.—*As though he needed any thing, &c.* It was impiety, not adoration, to offer sacrifices to such a being, under the im-

pression that they were necessary to his existence or happiness; for he is not only all-sufficient to himself, but is the inexhaustible source of life, and breath by which life is supported, and of all things which make it desirable, happy, and hopeful.

26. *Made of one blood all nations of men, &c.* Here, and in ver. 30, the apostle teaches the doctrine of a divine Providence, in tacit opposition to those philosophers who held that all human beings and affairs were the sport of chance, or the machines of fate. God had originally made all of one parentage, and arranged the period of national existence, and determined the vast changes of colonization and emigration. He had placed one tribe here, and another there; and determined the rise, decline, and fall of empires. He was not a national god, but the Father of the whole family of man. By asserting the doctrine of a common origin, the apostle at the same time virtually taught that, as a Jew, he did not, and that his audience, as Grecians, ought not to, claim any natural superiority over the rest of mankind. The Jews should not pride themselves upon being the chosen people, nor the Athenians boast of their descent,—claiming, as they did, to be aborigines on the soil of Attica,—nor the philosophers wrap themselves up in haughty pride, and stand aloof from their species; for the same blood flowed in all their veins. Olshausen remarks that the apostle here confirms the doctrine of the Old Testament, which acquires, after all the latest researches

27 before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation ; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find 28 him, though he be not far from every one of us : for in him we live, and move, and have our being ; as certain also of your own 29 poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and

of physiology and geology, new and complete probability that all mankind descended from one pair. The common origin of the human race furnishes a host of arguments against slavery, oppression, pride, and selfishness ; and bids every mortal man remember, with vivid feeling, that he is his "brother's keeper," wherever his influence can extend.

27, 28. *If haply they might feel after him, &c.* i. e. if, perhaps, or possibly, they might search after him, and find him out, even in the twilight of natural religion. The end for which they were created, placed on the earth, and nourished, was to seek God, to pursue after the highest knowledge, to live a spiritual life in the Father. Even the works of nature bespoke One God, if men would seek to know him. Rom. i. 19, 20. — *Though he be not far from every one, &c.* Jer. xxiii. 23, 24. The nearness of God to his creatures, and his interest in them, were doctrines in direct contradiction both to those who denied the existence of a presiding divinity, and to those who resolved him into an iron destiny. — *In him we live, &c.* This is connected with the foregoing clause, and forms a species of climax ; God is not only near us, but we live in Him who is all in all. According to Neander, it may be understood as expressing more than what men have in common with other creatures, viz., their secret connection with God, as the Father of spirits, in virtue of their spiritual and moral nature. — *As cer-*

*tain, also, of your own poets have said, &c.* It appears that Paul was conversant with Greek literature, as well as the peculiar learning of the Jews. The sentiment of his quotation is found in several ancient poets, with a heathen application. In a hymn to Jupiter by Cleanthes, a Stoic philosopher and poet of Troas, successor to Zeno as the master of that system of philosophy, occurs the following passage :

" Majestic Jove, all hail ! To thee belong  
The suppliant prayer, the tributary song,  
To thee from all thy mortal offspring due.  
From thee we came, from thee our being drew :  
Whatever lives and moves, great Sire ! is thine,  
Embodyed portions of the soul divine ! "

But more particularly, in a poem upon descriptive astronomy, entitled *Phænomena*, and written by Aratus, B. C. 250, a native of Cilicia, the country of Paul, we have the exact words of the text :

" From Jove we sprung, whom we mortals  
Should ne'er  
Leave unsung. Of Jove the public walks  
Are  
Full, and councils all of men ; both the sea  
And shore are full of him. From Jove comes  
All  
That we enjoy ; for we are his offspring."

The original forms half of an hexameter verse. Hesiod, Pindar, and Lucretius expressed the same idea, with slight verbal variations.

29. *We are the offspring of God, &c.* Gen. i. 26, 27. The reasoning of the apostle is clear and strong. Since men are living and intelligent creatures, capable of seeking after God, and since they are the offspring

man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; 30 but now commandeth all men every where to repent: because 31 he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by *that* man whom he hath ordained: *whereof* he hath given assurance unto all *men*, in that he hath raised him

of the Deity, they ought not to suppose that any thing less than worship to Him as a living being, would satisfy their obligations to him, or the claims of their own spiritual nature. The conclusion is, that the whole paraphernalia of idolatry — its temples, statuary, altars, and sacrifices — was a false method of worship. For God did not reside in this temple, or that statue, peculiarly, since they were but dead matter, but he was a living intelligence like his worshippers; as were the offspring, so was the parent. He was a spirit, and nought would suffice but a spiritual worship, agreeable to the qualities of his own nature. As if Paul had said, "We, who are of celestial origin, ought to entertain more noble ideas of our celestial Father than to liken him to gold or silver, or to enshrine him in a motionless, though beautiful, statue of stone." Is. xl. 18 — 23. — *Graven*, i. e. wrought or sculptured — an art carried to great perfection at Athens.

30. *This ignorance God winked at*, &c. i. e. God, in ages past, had, with much long-suffering, overlooked, so to say, the abominations of heathenism, great as they were, and had not interposed to bring them to an immediate end. The measure of men's privileges was the rule of his judgment. Luke xii. 48. He permitted demonstration to be made to them, how far they could attain to the knowledge of him without revelation. Chap. xiv. 16, and note. But he had now interposed to save them from their spiritual debasement, and the first word of the new dispensation was *Repentance*. This was the bur-

den of John's preaching, and the earliest precept of Jesus. The apostles sounded the same call, and the preachers of every age must proclaim this imperative and preliminary duty, and the promises of pardon and blessedness. 2 Peter iii. 9. But, as remarked by Cappe, the apostle is not urging the argument for repentance, *in general*, so much as that all men every where should turn themselves from ritual observances, from superstition and idolatry, and serve Him, the living and true God, in spirit, and in truth.

31. *Judge the world in righteousness*. "Judge" is often used in the Bible with the sense of *rule, govern*. 1 Sam. viii. 5, 6; 1 Kings iii. 9; Mat. xix. 28; Acts xxiv. 10. Here was a powerful motive for repentance, and the adoption of a spiritual religion. God, who had hitherto suffered men to walk, as it were, in their own ways, had now placed the world under the moral rules of a new dispensation, with a new governor at its head; and had, moreover, given assurance, by his resurrection from the dead, of his full power and authority, as the representative of God, and opened the view of a future day of righteous retribution. See notes on John v. 25 — 29, and Acts x. 42. — *By that man whom he hath ordained*. If Jesus had been known to Paul as the eternal and self-existent God, it is utterly incredible that he should have used a term expressive of a finite, and created being. It is the singular remark of Calmet, that "Paul gives the name of *man* to the Saviour, because his hearers were not yet in a condition to know his di-

**32** from the dead. — And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this *matter*. So Paul departed from among them. **34** Howbeit, certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

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vinity, (deity.) He did not wish to throw pearls before swine." — *In that he hath raised him, &c.* The resurrection of Christ was the grand proof of his commission and authority from God, and at the same time exhibited his moral empire over the souls of men as extending onwards beyond the transient dominion of the grave, and spreading throughout a boundless eternity.

**32. Some mocked.** They were, probably, the Epicureans, who disbelieved in a future state, and who would, therefore, be most disposed to ridicule the doctrine of the resurrection. The apostle was interrupted before the conclusion of his speech, and it can only remain matter of conjecture, what turn he would have finally given to the argument for the Christian mission before the polished Athenians. — *We will hear thee again.* These were perhaps the Stoicks, who held some notions of a general conflagration, and the restoration of the earth under a regenerated form.

**33, 34. Departed.** From the Areopagus. — *Howbeit.* Notwithstanding the general levity with which his inimitable discourse was received, there were a few in whose hearts he had planted the arrows of conviction. It is remarkable, however, that, while flourishing churches were founded in some remote provincial towns, in this city no Christian community appears to have been then gathered. The philosophy of Athens presented, seemingly, a more adamantine front to the reception of the humble gospel of the crucified One, than the

sensuality of Corinth, or the ambition of Rome. — *Dionysius the Areopagite.* A member of the august court of the Areopagus. One convert from such a body was no small trophy. Nothing further is known of him with assurance. — *Damaris.* Probably a woman of rank and influence.

It is worthy of especial attention, that the discourses of the apostles, in the book of the Acts, though addressed to both Jews and Gentiles, contain scarce a trace, even by hard-wrung inference, of those doctrines that are now brought forward as the very sum and substance of the gospel by many Christians, and without assent to which none are allowed by them the Christian name or privileges. May we not put our finger fearlessly on the speeches of Peter and Paul, and ask where, where is the dogma of the Trinity? of the Deity (not the divinity) of Jesus Christ? of the Personality of the Holy Spirit? of the total native Depravity of man? of the vicarious sufferings and death of Christ? of the Election of some to eternal life, and of others to eternal perdition, without choice or act of their own? — and other points which might be specified. On the contrary, are not the direct teachings of these inspired men clearly the following: — the One God, the Maker of all, and Father of men; the Messiah, predicted to the Jews by the prophets as his Son, and the Saviour of sinners; the Holy Spirit, as the miraculous aid and gifts bestowed on the apostles and others, or the natural influence of the mind

## CHAPTER XVIII.

*Paul visits Corinth and Ephesus, and returns to Judea and Syria; and thence makes a Tour in Asia Minor. Apollos embraces the Gospel, and becomes a Preacher.*

**AFTER** these things, Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; and found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla, (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome,) and came

of God upon the mind of man; the duty of Faith in the Son of God, of Repentance for sin, and Reformation of life; of the Immortality of the soul, and a Future State of righteous Retribution. It is painful to speak of the controversies of our time; a sad silence seems sometimes the only fitting expression; but the cause of Christian truth, and the salvation of sinners, demand that what was taught with the wisdom, and sealed with the blood, of those sainted men of the apostolic age, and what agreed perfectly with the lessons of the Master himself, should be brought into that clear and natural perspective in which they were then set; and that the additions and corruptions of men, originated in Jewish and heathen philosophy, imposed by the terrors of persecution, and still sustained by the force of prejudice and custom, should be thrown out of the scene. The Bible be our creed, Christ our Master, and all holy men our church!

## CHAPTER XVIII.

**1. Corinth.** The apostle soon left Athens, where the truth apparently made little impression, and came to this city, the capital of Achaia. Corinth was built on the isthmus which joins the Peloponnesus to the rest of Greece and the continent, between the Corinthian Gulf, on the west, running up from the Ionian Sea, and the Saronic Gulf, connected with the Ægean Sea, on the east. It had two ports, Lechæum and Cenchrea, re-

spectively situated on the above waters. Though once utterly destroyed by the Romans, it was, at the time of this history, flourishing in all its magnificence. It was the mart of commerce between the eastern and western parts of the Mediterranean Sea, bordering on Europe, and distinguished for its riches, luxury, and debauchery, so that it has been called at once the *Venice* and the *Paris* of antiquity. The arts and literature were also here carried to great perfection, and Corinth added one order to architecture. Such was its splendor, that Cicero called it “the light of all Greece,” though, in dissoluteness of manners and the licentious worship of Venus, it probably exceeded the sensuality of any ancient city. Two of the epistles of Paul are directed to the disciples at this place.

**2. A certain Jew named Aquila.** Who afterwards became a Christian, Rom. xvi. 3, 4, together with his wife. — *Pontus.* See chap. ii. 9, and note. — *Italy.* One of the southern countries of Europe, extending into the Mediterranean Sea, whose capital was Rome. — *Claudius*, i. e. Claudius Cesar, the Roman emperor, A. D. 41 to A. D. 54, when he was put to death by poison. — *Had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome.* Suetonius, the biographer of Claudius, relates that “he expelled from Rome the Jews, who were constantly exciting tumult under their leader Chrestus;” by which, as is supposed by many, the disturbances between the

3 unto them. And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought, (for by their occupation they were tent-makers.) And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, 4 and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks. And when Silas and 5 Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in 6 spirit, and testified to the Jews, *that Jesus was Christ.* And

Jews and the Christians, chiefly converts from the Jews, are to be understood — the historian mistaking the exact name, and not understanding but what the prime agent was himself living, and present at Rome. A Roman historian, occupied, as he would believe, with far greater matters of courts and kingdoms, would not be likely to be very well informed about the despised Jews, nor to investigate very accurately the history of their obscure chiefs. But the general agreement between the profane and the sacred writer is worthy of remark, as proof of Luke's veracity and fidelity as a narrator of the events of the time. It may be added, that the decree of banishment was not long in force, as Claudius soon afterwards died, and Aquila was again in Rome. Rom. xvi. 3.

3. *The same craft.* Or trade, or art. — *And wrought.* This statement coincides with many passages in the epistles. 1 Cor. iv. 12; 2 Cor. xi. 9; 1 Thes. ii. 9; 2 Thes. iii. 8; Acts xx. 34. According to the customs of Jewish education, Paul had been taught the trade of tent-making; and, not wishing to be burdensome to his friends in Corinth and Ephesus, and desirous of removing every unworthy charge, "that the ministry be not blamed," he toils for his own support with a lofty independence. It was a saying of the Talmud, that he "that teacheth not his son a trade does as if he taught him to be a thief." Some of the rabbins were called "shoemakers," others "bakers and carpenters," &c. Jesus himself was a me-

chanic; see notes on Mat. xiii. 55, and Mark vi. 3. Well would it be, if labor was ever held in such honor, and idleness and uselessness classed with their proper disgrace. "Un-speakably touching is it, when both dignities (of the material and the spiritual laborer) are united; and he that must toil outwardly for the lowest of man's wants is also toiling inwardly for the highest. Sublimer, in this world, know I nothing, than a peasant-saint, could such now any where be met with. Such a one will take thee back to Nazareth itself; thou wilt see the splendor of heaven spring forth from the humblest depths of earth, like a light shining in great darkness." — *Tent-makers.* This trade was in great request in the East, for supplying soldiers, travellers, and others.

4, 5. *Reasoned — every Sabbath.* Laboring with his hands during the six days of the week, he strove, on the seventh, to reconcile his fellow-men to God, and implant in their hearts the gospel-seed, the germs of infinite love, progress, and blessedness. — *Were come.* They were directed to follow him, chap. xvii. 15, with all expedition. — *Was pressed in spirit.* "He was under the impulse of ardent zeal." He was constrained to speak. The coming of his friends, and the intelligence they brought, kindled his soul with a new ardor in his great work, and encouraged him to preach with redoubled power. 1 Cor. ii. 1—5. — *Was Christ.* Rather, "was the Christ."

6. *And blasphemed.* They not only

when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook *his raiment*, and said unto them, Your blood *be* upon your own heads: I *am* clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles. And he departed thence, and entered into a certain *man's* house, <sup>7</sup> named Justus, *one* that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue. And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, <sup>8</sup> believed on the Lord with all his house: and many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized. Then spake the <sup>9</sup> Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall <sup>10</sup> set on thee, to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city. And he continued *there* a year and six months, teaching the word <sup>11</sup> of God among them.

opposed the gospel, but heaped insult and impious contempt upon the blessed cause.—*Shook his raiment.* As if to shake off the dust of the place, or to express his abhorrence of their conduct, and to show that he considered his skirts clear of their destruction. Neh. v. 13; Acts xiii. 51.—*Your blood be upon your own heads, &c.* The responsibility rests upon you, not upon me. There is no imprecation or threat, but an emphatic assertion, that, if they perished, they would perish by their own folly, and not because the way of salvation had not been pointed out to them. 2 Sam. i. 16; Ezek. xxxiii. 4; Mat. xxvii. 25.—*Henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.* Not in general, but particularly at Corinth; for, elsewhere, Paul still addressed the Jews first, as had been his custom. Chap. xix. 8, 9. These words were spoken, not in anger and revenge, at his little success, but in warning and a holy indignation at their wickedness.

7. *Departed thence*, i. e. from the synagogue.—*Entered into a certain man's house.* It appears to have been not his lodgings which he changed, but his place of holding religious meetings.—*Joined hard to the synagogue.* Or, was situated very near, which

circumstance, perhaps, rendered it more convenient for general access. Nothing further is known of Justus.

8. *Crispus.* 1 Cor. i. 14. He was baptized by Paul, perhaps, on account of his official station in the synagogue.—*The chief ruler, &c.* There were usually several intrusted with the care of the synagogues, of which one held the chief post. The Sosthenes of ver. 17 was, perhaps, chosen as his successor.

9, 10. *Be not afraid.* 1 Cor. ii. 3. The apostle had met with much opposition, and needed encouragement.—*No man shall set on thee, to hurt thee.* It has been suspected that a conspiracy was formed against him, which threatened his life, but he was assured that he was shielded by a higher power.—*For I have much people in this city.* This was a reason why he should persevere in preaching the gospel. Many would be converted to the Christian faith, and unite with the band of believers, and thus become the people of God. Dissolute though it was, Corinth afforded a finer field for religious influence than Athens, for it was not puffed up, like that city, with the conceit of its own wisdom. 1 Cor. i. 22.

11. *Continued there a year and six months.* On account of the success

12 And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to 13 the judgment-seat, saying, This *fellow* persuadeth men to worship 14 God contrary to the law. And when Paul was now about to open *his* mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong, or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I

which attended his labors, and the multitude of his converts. It was during this period, as is supposed with great probability, that he wrote his two epistles to the Thessalonians, and perhaps that to the Galatians; since the churches in those places had been lately planted, and required guidance and encouragement.

12. *Gallio.* He was a younger brother of Seneca, the distinguished moralist and philosopher, and uncle of the epic poet Lucan. He is eulogized by Seneca, Quintilian, and Statius, as uncommonly amiable and gentle in speech and manners, free from art and dissimulation, and beloved by all. He was appointed a second time governor of Achaia, but was finally put to death by the ferocious Nero, as were also his brothers, Seneca, and Mela the father of Lucan. — *Deputy of Achaia.* After the conquest of Greece, the Romans divided it into two provinces — the northern called Macedonia, and the southern Achaia, which last included Attica and the Peloponnesus. Achaia was originally given to the senate and the people; see note on chap. xiii. 7; and was under a governor called *proconsul*, or, as improperly rendered in the text, “deputy;” but it afterwards belonged to the emperor, and was governed by an officer called *proprætor*. Before the time of the present history, however, it had reverted to the people, A. D. 44, and was ruled by Gallio, A. D. 52 or 53, as *proconsul*. It afterwards passed through various fortunes of freedom and servitude: but Luke shows his

acquaintance with the political history of his times, in giving to Gallio his proper title, as a Roman proconsul. — *The Jews — judgment-seat.* The Jews, perhaps, assaulted Paul, and brought him to the tribunal of the governor at this particular time, partly because Gallio was a mild and peaceful man, whom they thought easily to bend to their purposes, and partly because he was lately installed in his office, as is implied by the first clause of the verse, properly translated: “And upon Gallio becoming proconsul, the Jews,” &c. But they were disappointed in their man. The great success of Paul had doubtless previously inflamed their envy, and prepared the way for this uproar.

13. *To worship God contrary to the law*, i. e. the law of Moses. The Romans tolerated the Jews in their worship; and the present charge was, that this enjoyment of their peculiar religious privileges was encroached upon by the heresy of Paul inculcating the worship of God contrary to their usages, but not contrary, in reality, to the spirit of the Mosaic dispensation.

14. *A matter of wrong.* Or, of injustice. — *Wicked lewdness.* Or, mischief, or crime. When Paul was about to enter upon his defence, Gallio prevented him by stating that, if the cause was one of crime, as theft, or murder, or any civil offence, it would fall beneath his jurisdiction, and it would be reasonable that he should bear with the Jews, or patiently examine the cause.

should bear with you: but if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it: for I will be no judge of such matters. And he drove them from the judgment-seat. <sup>16</sup> Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the <sup>18-17</sup> synagogue, and beat him before the judgment-seat. And Gallio cared for none of those things.

And Paul *after this* tarried *there* yet a good while, and then <sup>18</sup> took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn *his* head in Cen-

15, 16. *A question of words—names—law.* But, on the contrary, he assured them that if it was, as he understood it to be, a question among themselves in reference to their religious factions, he would have nothing to do with it. As if he had said, “I am not sent here as a judge of your religious differences; these are to be rectified among yourselves.” And his decision was strictly according to the extent of his jurisdiction, and accorded well with the character given him above by his contemporaries. — *Drove them.* Or, authoritatively dismissed them from the tribunal.

17. *The Greeks*, i. e. the heathen Gentiles, and the party which sided with Paul, who, in their imperfect conformity to the Christian spirit, and exasperated by the malignity of the Jews towards the apostle, attacked Sosthenes, as the principal head of the difficulty, and vented upon him, in blows, their indignation at his hostility. — *Sosthenes.* It would seem that he succeeded Crispus, after he was converted to Christianity, as the chief ruler of the synagogue, though he afterwards became a prominent disciple of Christ, 1 Cor. i. 1, notwithstanding the abuse which he at this time received, apparently from the adherents of Paul. — *Beat him.* By this word, in the original, is to be understood, not that he was formally scourged or beaten with rods, but that they struck him with their fists,

as he passed through the excited multitude from the tribunal of the proconsul. — *Gallio cared for none of those things.* This does not mean, as is often popularly understood, that Gallio was indifferent to religion, Jewish or Christian, for that question did not, as he understood it, come before him to decide upon at all; but that he did not concern himself and interpose his power to arrest the rioters, but was “willing,” in the language of Doddridge, “by his connivance, to leave so troublesome a plaintiff as Sosthenes to feel some of the consequence of that confusion which his own bigotry and ill-nature had occasioned.”

18. *Tarried there yet a good while.* He had already been in Corinth a year and six months, ver. 11, and, notwithstanding the late commotion, he continued to remain yet longer. — *Sailed thence into Syria*, i. e. to Antioch, as the place whence he had issued on this missionary tour. Chap xv. 35, 40. — *Priscilla and Aquila.* See ver. 2. — *Having shorn his head in Cenchrea.* This was the port of Corinth on the east, situated upon the waters of the *Aegean* Sea, from which those sailing to Syria would embark. It was customary for the Jews to make vows, upon deliverance from danger, recovery from sickness, or unexpected blessings, that they would abstain from spirituous drinks, suffer the hair to grow during a certain specified period, longer or short-

19 chrea; for he had a vow. And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews. When they desired *him* to tarry longer 20 time with them, he consented not: but bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed 21 from Ephesus. And when he had landed at Cesarea, and gone

er, at the expiration of which, offerings were made, the head was shaved, and the individual returned to his ordinary mode of life. In the present instance, it was probably the vow of the Nazarite, so called. Num. vi. 18. The important question here is, whether it was Paul or Aquila who made and performed this vow, though the general opinion is in favor of the latter, particularly as the order in which Priscilla and Aquila are mentioned is inverted, see ver. 2, 26, as if to indicate who it was that shaved his head in Cenchrea because he had a vow, though in Rom. xvi. 3, and 2 Tim. iv. 19, they are placed in the same sequence. Other considerations, however, appear to weigh on the other side with greater force; as that Paul is the principal subject of the narrative, and the mention of his companions is introduced rather by way of parenthesis; and that we afterwards read of his performance of a vow, chap. xxi. 23, 24; and that it was agreeable to the temper of Paul to conform to the Jewish usages, so far as was innocent, and as did not involve the Gentiles in the yoke of Mosaic bondage, because he thus secured a hold on many of his weak brethren, which he would have lost by making a violent disruption of all his old ties. We may even suppose, too, without any imputation on his Christian piety, that his heart still clung with lingering satisfaction to the forms in which he had been brought up from his youth, and which

were hallowed by the blessed associations of childhood.

19. *Ephesus.* This celebrated city was the capital of the region of Ionia, and Lydia, or Asia, in which it was situated. It lay about 40 miles south of Smyrna, and 5 from the sea, and contained the splendid temple of Diana, one of the seven wonders of the world. This splendid edifice was about 400 feet long, 200 high, and supported by 127 marble columns, 60 feet high, which had been the offerings of as many kings, each one contributing a pillar. It was not finished until 220 years after its commencement. It was burnt by the torch of an incendiary, who sought thus to immortalize his name, on the night of the birth of Alexander the Great; but it was rebuilt in more than its former glory. Yet the ruins of this city are now with difficulty identified.

21. *I must by all means keep this feast.* See note on ver. 18. It would seem that he was drawn to Jerusalem by some unusual business at that time, whether on account of the performance of a vow is not said, though he certainly did not deem it obligatory on him to attend all the great festivals at the holy city. — *If God will.* Where this devout proviso is not expressed, it ought at least to be always understood. James iv. 13 — 15.

22. *Cesarea.* See note on Acts viii. 40. This was upon the sea-board of Palestine, about 65 miles from Jerusalem, whither he went to

up and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch. And after 23 he had spent some time *there*, he departed and went over *all* the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order; strengthening all the disciples.

And a certain Jew, named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an 24 eloquent man, *and* mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord: and being 25 fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began 26 to speak boldly in the synagogue: Whom, when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto *them*, and expounded

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pay his respects to his brethren, and report his travels and labors, brightening the chain of Christian brotherhood.—*Antioch*. In Syria, his ultimate destination.

23. *Went over all the country, &c.* He not only planted, but watered what he had planted. Like his Master, he went about doing good. His spirit rises with the vastness of his work, and his zeal kindles to a higher, purer flame, at every encounter of opposition. He grasps the most distant cities in his plans of benevolence, flies from country to country to preach the gospel, and from youth to age strains every energy and faculty of his powerful genius, and uses every gift of the heaven-descended Spirit, to push forward the work of human salvation. Glorious being! upon what a grand scale was every virtue of the gospel lived out, and every truth of heaven enforced and adorned!

24, 25. *Apollos*—*Alexandria*. This city in Egypt was overflowing with Jews, and it was not strange that the reformation of John had penetrated thus far, and seized with a strong hold upon the class of more spiritual and aspiring minds, of which Apollos was one. See note on Acts vi. 9.—*Eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures*, i. e. in the Hebrew Bible. His gifts of oratory were

even preferred, as would seem, by some, to those of Paul, 1 Cor. iii. 4, 6, iv. 6, from the unhappy divisions which afterwards sprung up in the church at Corinth.—*In the way of the Lord*. He had caught from the idea of John a glimpse of the Messiah, but was as yet in the dark respecting his advent; in short, was just in that state of preparation, when he would hear with readiness the further instruction which even humble, private disciples, like Aquila and Priscilla, were able to impart to him. The accession of such a laborer, so able and so prepared, gifted with a fervid zeal and a commanding eloquence, was truly providential, and betokened the still living and favoring guidance of more than human wisdom over the fortunes of the infant church.—*The baptism of John*. That is, his preliminary dispensation and reformation, generalized in the prominent ceremony of his system.

26. *In the synagogue*. He also resorted to the houses of Jewish worship, to advocate his views.—*The way of God more perfectly*. They would point out to him the advent of him, of whom John the Baptist professed himself to be but the lowly forerunner, and could lead him up to the cross of the Son of God, and open the precious scroll of his teachings, sufferings, promises, and mira-

27 unto him the way of God more perfectly. And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them 28 much which had believed through grace. For he mightily convinced the Jews, *and that* publicly, showing by the Scriptures, that Jesus was Christ.

### CHAPTER XIX.

*The Labors and Miracles of Paul, and the Persecution he encountered at Ephesus.*

AND it camé to pass, that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul, having passed through the upper coasts, came to Ephesus; and 2 finding certain disciples, he said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.

cles. And they found a docile pupil in the learned and eloquent Apollos, though fresh from the schools of Alexandria, and burning to propagate his sentiments by travel and preaching through different countries and cities. A beautiful instance of fidelity to truth, and aspiration after its purest form, and of patient docility to whoever could communicate the priceless gift.

27, 28. *Disposed to pass, &c.* He now wished more than ever to run on the errands of benevolence, to help a sinful and suffering world, for he felt that he was charged with a new element of power, and that he went forth in a far mightier name.—*Helped them much.* 1 Cor. iii. 4–6.—*Believed through grace,* i. e. through the favor of God, were privileged to hear the preaching of the gospel, and thus were established in its belief, as a revelation of the mercy of God to the sinner.—*Was Christ.* “Was the Christ,” or Messiah. The earnest convictions of his own mind, so lately opened to the truth, lent fervor and persuasiveness to his preaching. His learning in the Hebrew Scriptures now found a better use, for he saw with a new eye the point-

ing of every prophetic finger to “the glory of Israel” and “the light of the Gentiles,” in the person of Jesus the Messiah.

### CHAPTER XIX.

1. *The upper coasts*, i. e. the more mountainous districts of Asia Minor, lying inland from the sea, as Phrygia and Galatia, chap. xviii. 23, from which Paul descended to the maritime region of Ephesus.—*Came to Ephesus.* Thus fulfilling his promise of chap. xviii. 21.—*Disciples.* They were then only the disciples of John,—though afterwards converted to the Christian faith,—and were naturally designated by Luke by the title which they then received, though it was given subsequently to the period mentioned.

2. *Since ye believed.* Or, became the disciples of John, and expectants, according to his doctrine, of a Messiah soon to come.—*Whether there be any Holy Ghost.* Spirit. In the paraphrase of Wall: “We have not so much as heard whether there be any such powers of prophesying, speaking with tongues, &c., granted to those that believe.” And Rosenmuller defines the Spirit, as “those

And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized ? And 3 they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily 4 baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard *this*, they were bap- 5 tized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid 6 his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. And all the men were 7 about twelve.

miraculous and extraordinary gifts which were reserved for the Christian church." This verse contains a direct argument against the personality of the Holy Spirit, as constituting the third person of the Godhead. For, if there had been this distinct being, would Jews, would disciples of John the Baptist, acquainted as they were with the true God, be ignorant of his very existence ? It is incredible. A similar argument is found in John vii. 39, when properly translated,— "For the Holy Spirit was not yet;" i.e. the spiritual influence from above had not yet descended; but if, by the Holy Spirit, is meant a person, we there have an assertion that it was not yet—did not exist. Lightfoot gives an old saying of the Jews, that, "after the death of Zechariah, Malachi, and those last prophets, the Spirit of God departed from Israel, and went up;" or, the gifts of miracle and inspiration ceased until the advent of the Messiah.

3, 4. *Unto John's baptism.* The surprise of Paul ceased when he learned that they were the disciples of John the Baptist, and had received only the preliminary baptism of repentance and reformation, which he administered. Chap. xviii. 25.—*That they should believe on him, &c.* His reasoning was, that if they already believed on John, they must go farther, and believe on Jesus, the Messiah, whom he predicted, and required

his disciples to follow. Mat. iii. 11, 12.—*Christ Jesus.* More clear and emphatic in the Greek, "the Christ Jesus;" though Griesbach cancels the words "the Christ." To identify Jesus of Nazareth as the expected Messiah of the Jews, was the burden of the apostolic preaching.

5. *Were baptized in the name, &c.* They had been baptized by John the Baptist, but were now re-baptized, by command of the apostle, because their previous baptism was not properly a Christian rite, and did not constitute an initiation into the church of the Messiah. No precedent, nor warrant, however, is, here or elsewhere, given by the apostles to re-baptize those who have already received Christian baptism. For its validity consists not in the mode, or name, but in the spirit in which it is performed, as an act of consecration, and an emblem of sanctification; and once performed, it is ever performed, neither admitting of addition nor subtraction.

6. *Laid his hands upon them*, as a significant gesture.—*They spake with tongues, and prophesied.* We here have the explanation given of what is meant by the Holy Spirit in this connexion, viz., spiritual gifts, more than ordinary powers, the evidences of the approving sanction of God. Chap. x. 44—47. 1 Cor. xii. xiv, "They spoke with foreign tongues, and used their gift in the exercise of inspired teaching and

8 And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing 10 daily in the school of one Tyrannus. And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard 11 the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. And God 12 wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs, or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of

preaching." The order in which the gifts are mentioned has been observed to be the same as that in 1 Cor. xiv. 5.

8. *Spake boldly.* See note on chap. iv. 13. *Disputing* or discussing, arguing.—*Persuading the things, &c.* His aim was to persuade his hearers of the truth of the gospel, and win them to its faith and obedience.—*The kingdom of God.* Equivalent to the Christian religion, for where it prevails, God truly reigns as the king, and his will is felt to be supreme.

9. *Of that way.* A phrase often used to describe the new religion. Chap. xvi. 17, xviii. 26. The apostle, finding that his influence was undermined, with the mass of the people, by the malignity of his enemies, withdrew from the sphere of their influence to a place of Gentile resort. Chap. xviii. 6.—*Daily.* While meeting with his friends in the synagogue, he employed, probably, only the Sabbath for his public addresses; but, in his new situation, his zeal prompts him to do what was not, perhaps, allowable in the synagogue—address the people daily on his great inspiring theme.—*In the school of one Tyrannus,* i. e. in the hall, or room, used by this person,—who was probably a Greek rhetorician or philosopher,—for the in-

struction of his pupils. He seems not unfriendly to the Christian cause, and he may have been even an adherent.

10. *The space of two years.* The importance of Ephesus, as a place of vast resort, prolonged his stay; though he might make excursions, meanwhile, into the surrounding region, as is implied by the next clause.—*Asia.* Of which Ephesus was the metropolis. Note on chap. ii. 9.—*Both Jews and Greeks.* Notwithstanding his withdrawal, in ver. 9, the apostle still stretched out imploring hands to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

11. *Special miracles,* i. e. literally, "not usual;" uncommon miracles, such as are described in the next verses. Among miracles, some are more wonderful than others.

12. *Handkerchiefs, or aprons.* According to their derivation, the former signifying, in the original, what was used in wiping off the perspiration; and the latter, a half girdle, or, as is rightly rendered, "apron."—*The evil spirits went out of them.* In other words, cases of insanity, epilepsy, and lunacy, were cured. It is contended by some, that the possessions must have been literally true; that evil and wicked spirits did actually enter into men, and possess them, because such cases are distin-

them. — Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took 13 upon them to call over them which had evil spirits, the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. And there were seven sons of *one* Sceva a Jew, *and* 1, chief of the priests, which did so. And the evil spirit answered 1: and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?

guished, as here, from other diseases. They are, indeed, so distinguished from others; but for the same reason that leprosy is distinguished from other disorders, Mat. x. 8, viz., on account of its greater severity and incurableness. We are not to infer, by any means, that the handkerchiefs and aprons, carried from Paul, had any other efficacy than as he willed the cure of the sick who were not in his presence,—some article being carried as a token, to connect the agent with the act, the miracle with him who wrought it. Mat. ix. 21, 22; Acts v. 15.

13. *Vagabond.* As we should say, strolling or itinerant Jews.—*Exorcists.* Literally, “those who bind with an oath;” or, by adjurations, expel demons. This class of pretenders was very numerous. They professed, by using certain incantations, whose virtue had been discovered by King Solomon, to be able to expel diseases and evil spirits from their wretched victims. This quackery, like its successors of modern times, gained great credence, and was sustained by multitudes of patrons.—*We adjure you by Jesus.* Lightfoot informs us that similar adjurations are to be found in the Talmuds. “One being sick, a certain person came to him, and muttered upon him in the name of Jesus of Pandira,—a scornful and opprobrious designation of the Saviour,—and he was healed.” “Ben Damah was bitten by a serpent. James of Capharsaon came to heal him in the name of Jesus, but Rabbi Ismael permitted

him not.” Seeing the wonders of Paul’s power, they idly supposed that, by employing the same name, they could do the like. They regarded him but as a mere adventurer, like themselves, whom fortune had favored by granting him a magic name of great efficacy. Mat. xii. 27.—*Whom Paul preacheth.* The indication of a pitiful imitation of the apostle’s power. They mention the name particularly, that there might be no mistake; but they find it to be more powerful against themselves than against the disease.

14. *Sceva.* Nothing further is known of this individual.—*Chief of the priests*, i. e. a chief-priest, one of the most eminent in the sacerdotal order; the head, perhaps, of one of the courses of priests. Luke i. 5.

15. *The evil spirit*, i. e. the man who thought himself possessed by an evil spirit.—*Jesus I know, and Paul I know.* For the apostle had preached in Ephesus a long time, and would be easily known, especially on account of the celebrity of his miracles. Chap. xvi. 17; Mark i. 24, 34. It has been observed by the commentators, that the question of the demoniac is not that of ignorance, but partly of reproach towards those who cannot make good their professions; and, partly, of contempt toward those, who neither consider the strength of their enemy, nor their own; but who, actuated by a certain foolhardiness, dare to contend with the stronger, in whose hand the mastery is but matter of sport.

16 And the man in whom the evil spirit was, leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out  
 17 of that house naked and wounded. And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus: and fear fell on  
 18 them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds.  
 19 Many also of them which used curious arts, brought their books

16. *Leaped.* A word, used in Greek, to describe wild animals springing upon their prey:—*Naked*, i. e. with garments torn and nearly rent off. Ripley, in his Notes, remarks, that “the violent conduct of the demoniac, here mentioned, shows that he was in a state of insanity.” In fact, the whole description of the case shows that he was a maniac; his furious indignation at being, as he thought, imposed upon by the exorcists, and his preternatural strength, with which he rushed upon them, and inflicted desperate blows, and tore off their garments, betoken, without doubt, a frantic madman. In the language of Farmer, “The demoniac fancied himself to be a demon, or possessed by one, and his indignation and rage (accelerating the motion of his blood and spirits) supplied him with new strength, and he assaulted and vanquished the exorcists, who were not prepared to make a defence, and were disgraced and dispirited by the public detection of their imposture.”

17. *Fear fell on all, &c.* “The disappointment and disgrace of these magicians served to vindicate the credit of St. Paul’s miracles; to create a high reverence of Jesus, in confirmation of whose divine authority they were performed, and to deter others from profaning his sacred name, by using it only as a charm. The occurrence seems to have been providentially designed to bring disgrace upon the Jewish exorcists, and thereby to answer the purposes mentioned above.”

18. *Confessed, and showed their deeds.* Or, practices. Those who were converted to the Christian faith confessed their sins in general, and also, as it would seem, confessed the particular iniquity of dealing in these magical arts, and imposing upon the credulity and superstition of their fellow-men. The late events had stirred their consciences, and struck a deeper chord of moral accountability for their actions; and, like true men and true Christians, they frankly made confession and acknowledgment of their misdeeds. Prov. xxviii. 13; Rom. x. 10. It is doing much to confess one’s offences, and it is a necessary step in repentance and amendment. The mind of the wrong-doer cannot be at peace while he cloaks his iniquity, for he carries in his bosom a secret too big to be hidden, and he feels relieved as soon as he has unburdened his heavy heart before the merciful Father. Thus the offending child makes confession to his parent, though it exposes him to punishment, because he cannot bear the weight of a hidden sin. Thus, too, the murderer prefers, at last, even death to the agonizing concealment of his guilt. For strong is our moral nature, even in its obliquities; and, as the bent bow is ever striving to resume its natural position, so does conscience continually press to gain its upright posture, and never quite loses its elasticity, even after the most dreadful perversions.

19. *Curious arts.* We here have an account of a part of that mon-

together, and burned them before all men; and they counted the

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strous system of idolatry which flourished in the midst of the most refined and learned cities of the heathen world. The Ephesians were notorious for the practice of these magical arts; and the books, or scrolls, on which the cabalistic words, charms, and incantations, were inscribed, obtained great celebrity under the name of the *Ephesian letters*. The occult characters were worn about their persons, and even stained upon their bodies, as charms, or amulets, to protect them against evil, to prosper them in their journeys, and defend them in war. This system of magic prevailed under the auspices of that mythology which was to fall before the advancement of the gospel. It was in the city where Diana was worshipped with such magnificence, that "the black art" of the conjurer and soothsayer wielded a prodigious influence; and the prices of the books alone, used by these deceivers, were reckoned by thousands in gold and silver. In proclaiming the worship of the true God, and salvation through Christ, the apostle was, therefore, removing the very corner-stone of that system of abominations.—*Burned them before all*. They showed their faith by their works; and not only repented of their sins, and made confession thereof, but they offered the only reparation they could, by reducing to ashes the implements of their unhallowed trade. By these books, we are to understand the scrolls which contained the potent words and incantations of sorcery and astrology; and which are mentioned in many ancient authors, as, Suidas, Hesychius, Clement of Alexandria, and Plutarch.—*Found it fifty thousand pieces of silver*. As it is uncertain what the value of the "piece of silver," here used, was, it can now be

only matter of conjecture what the total loss amounted to; but it has been variously reckoned,—some understanding the denomination of money to be the *drachm*, or *denarius*, when the sum would be about seven thousand dollars; others, that it was the Jewish *shekel*, when the whole would swell to the amount of twenty-eight thousand dollars, which, as some compute the relative prices of labor in our day, and also the worth of the precious metals, would be more than sixty thousand dollars in our currency. No severer criterion of the faith and self-sacrifice of the Ephesian disciples could have been given, than the destruction of so much property for conscience and Christ's sake. The love of money is so powerful a motive of conduct, that what drives it out must possess no common strength. A selfish prudence might have suggested also, with Judas, "To what purpose is all this waste?" These books might have been sold for much, and given to the poor. (See Pierpont's cogent sermon, entitled the "Ephesian Letters.") But they knew and suffered no compromise with duty. They committed the whole to the flames, because, if instruments of magic were pernicious to them, they were pernicious to others, to all, and their only proper end was destruction. They would not sell to another what was only evil to themselves, and thus become accessory to others' sins. They freely devote their property to God; and surely no incense from smoking hecatombs, or spicy altars, ever ascended to heaven, a sweeter offering, than the flames which consumed the books of fraud and sin, "the mammon of unrighteousness." Here is a lesson, for our day also, to study and practise. "The universal prevalence of

20 price of them, and found *it* fifty thousand *pieces* of silver. So mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed.

21 After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia, and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see 22 Rome. So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus; but he himself staid in Asia 23 for a season. — And the same time there arose no small stir 24 about that way. For a certain *man* named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small

Christianity would make much, that is now esteemed valuable property, utterly worthless."

20. *So mightily grew the word.* Nothing could better demonstrate the deep and living hold which the gospel had gained over the consciences and hearts of its believers, than these cheerful sacrifices in its behalf. And, in later ages, nothing has furnished better proof of the real predominance of Christianity, than the ready destruction of property devoted to bad uses, rather than permit it to fall into the hands of others, and continue to work indefinite ill. The slave-trade, and slavery; the sale of noxious books, and bad goods; the traffic in spirituous liquors as a beverage; and other cases, which will readily occur to the mind of the reader, afford spheres for a similar sacrifice, and a like reward.

21, 22. *Purposed in the spirit*, i. e. in his own mind. — *When he had passed through Macedonia, &c.* The same wish, as remarked by Paley, is expressed in Rom. i. 13, xv. 23, 24, which was written long after this time, and when he had accomplished so much of his plan as related to Macedonia and Achaia, and had only the journey to Jerusalem left unfinished, — though, in the epistle, there is also the addition of Spain to his tour. Thus, both the coincidence

and the difference betoken veracity and independence in the authors of the respective books. — *Rome.* As the existing metropolis of the world, it was a most important city for the apostle to the Gentiles to visit. — *Sent into Macedonia two, — Timotheus and Erastus.* He, probably, also designed they should go into Achaia and Corinth, after visiting Macedonia, for he purposed going there himself, ver. 21; and, in 1 Cor. iv. 17-19, he mentions having sent Timothy to that church. Erastus was chamberlain, or treasurer, of Corinth, as we learn from Rom. xvi. 23. See, also, 2 Tim. iv. 20. — *In Asia*, i. e. at its capital, Ephesus.

23, 24. *About that way*, i. e. concerning the religion of Christ. — *Silver shrines for Diana.* These were, probably, small portable models in silver of the splendid temple of Diana, described before, which were manufactured by Demetrius and others, and sold in great numbers to the numerous worshippers of the goddess from every part of the world. Ver. 27. The word, in the original, is "temples," — silver temples for Diana, i. e. temples in miniature. It was customary for the heathen to carry about with them sacred images, as charms, and also to place in their houses statues and shrines of their gods and goddesses. Diana was one of the

gain unto the craftsmen; whom he called, together with the 25 workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth: moreover, ye see and hear, that 26 not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying, That they be no gods which are made with hands. So that not only this 27 our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia, and the world wor-

twelve superior divinities, of which the Roman poet Ennius gave a list, in the following couplet:—

“ Juno, Vesta, Minervu, Cores, Diana, Venus,  
Mars,  
Mercurius, Jovis, Neptunu, Vulcaurus, Apollio.”

She was adored as Luna, or the Moon, in heaven; Diana, on the earth; and Hecate, or Proserpine, in Hades. She was the goddess of hunting, of travelling, of chastity, of childbirth, of enchantment, &c.; and was worshipped in different countries under different names, and different qualities were ascribed to her. But, at Ephesus, she was represented with a great number of breasts, and regarded as Nature, the mother of mankind. Thus, one of the inscriptions on an image of Diana was, “ Nature, full of varied creatures, and mother of all things.”

25. *Whom he called together, &c.* He called a general meeting, not only of his own workmen, but of all belonging to the same trade, who had a common interest at stake, in the perpetuity of heathen worship, as the source of their business and livelihood. — *Craft*, i. e., trade, or calling.

26. *This Paul hath persuaded, &c.* A trustworthy testimony, from an enemy, to the industry and zeal of the apostle to the Gentiles, and the success with which he had urged forward the Christian cause, far and wide, in that region. Ver. 10. In-

deed, the power and extensive influence of his preaching may be measured by the tremendous recoil of persecution against him, and the tempest of excitement into which the whole city was thrown. — *That they be no gods, &c.* Comp. chap. xiv. 15, xvii. 29.

27. *Our craft is in danger to be set at nought.* This was the first, and doubtless the chief, reason why he dreaded the success of Paul, and wished to excite a popular tumult against him. He was alarmed lest his lucrative business would decline, and the demand for silver shrines cease, on account of the prevalence of just ideas of God, and a true and spiritual worship. Demetrius is the representative of a large class, in every age, who are afraid, if religion, and temperance, and freedom, and purity, and righteousness, in all respects, prevail, that their unrighteous gains will diminish; and who, therefore, uphold existing abuses and wrongs with the energy of that passion which an apostle, with scarce a figure of speech, called “ the root of all evil.” Chap. xvi. 16. — *The temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised.* This was the second objection of the silversmith to Paul and the gospel; and we may suppose, also, the inferior one of the two. After he had looked well to his own interest, he could then afford to be jealous for the honor of Diana, and the magnificent

28 shippeth. — And when they heard *these sayings*, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians. 29 And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in 30 travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre. And when Paul would have entered in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not. And certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him desiring *him* that he would not adven-

worship of her temple. This pretended interest for religion would, of course, call forth a strong response from the multitude, who were, at least, sincere in their superstition, and who felt their religious impulses aroused to take sides against Paul, if he was chargeable with trespassing upon the ancient faith. — *All Asia, and the world.* Diana was not merely a local or national deity, but Greeks and Romans, from every quarter, contributed to the splendor of her temple and worship.

28. They became deeply excited by this mingled appeal to their cupidity and their superstition, — two of the strongest passions of human nature, when in a rude and uncultivated state. The only proper mode, which suggested itself to them, to express their devotion and their anger unitedly, was to vociferate the name of their goddess. Xenophon corroborates the epithet here bestowed upon their divinity, when he says, “I adjure you by your own goddess, the great Diana of the Ephesians.”

29. *Gaius.* This individual was a convert and host of Paul, and was baptized by him. Rom. xvi. 23; 1 Cor. i. 14. — *Aristarchus.* See Col. iv. 10. The object of the populace in seizing these men was probably to try them in a public assembly, and put them to death. — *The theatre.* This was not only the amphitheatre for dramatic spectacles and games, but was also the gathering-place of

the people to hold assemblies, hear harangues, and judge cases. These edifices were of immense size, and would hold many thousands. They were without roofs, and the seats gradually sloped up from the centre, on every side, so that those on the back were raised very high.

30. *Paul would have entered in.* To make his defence, and rescue his beloved companions. But such was the rage of the people, that his friends interposed to prevent his thus hazarding his life.

31. *The chief of Asia.* Persons were appointed, under the Roman government in the East, by annual election, to preside over the public worship of the gods, and to furnish, at their own expense, — for the rich only were chosen, — games and theatrical entertainments for the people. This office in the provinces resembled that of *aediles* at Rome. They were called after the country where they lived, as, Syriarchs from Syria; Cariarchs from Caria; Lyciarchs from Lycia; and those in the present verse were styled Asiarchs, or the rulers of Asia. Their number consisted of ten, chosen by the different cities of the province, and the appointments were confirmed by the Roman governor, or proconsul. There was one at the head of the commission, who resided at Ephesus, and who advised with his colleagues. Such is the account generally given of these officers by critics and historians. They were, in the present

ture himself into the theatre. Some therefore cried one thing, <sup>32</sup> and some another: for the assembly was confused, and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together. And they <sup>33</sup> drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made his defence unto the people. But when they knew <sup>34</sup> that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians. — And <sup>35</sup> when the town-clerk had appeased the people, he said, Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana,

case, friendly to the apostle, but not, as it would appear, converts to his doctrine. They join with the disciples in restraining him from the theatre, at which, it has been supposed, they were then solemnizing games. 2 Cor. i. 3–10, is thought to express his thankfulness at being delivered from the imminent danger, which occurred at this time, from the Ephesian populace. 1 Cor. xv. 32.

32. This verse contains a graphic description of a mob,—some shouting one thing, and some another, confusion presiding, and most not even knowing why they were assembled, but having been borne away by a popular sympathy.

33. *Drew Alexander out.* Or, caused him to advance out of the crowd. This individual is perhaps referred to in 1 Tim. i. 20, and 2 Tim. iv. 14, as hostile to Paul and the cause of truth. It is observable that he was of a similar trade as Demetrius,—being a worker in the metals,—and probably, therefore, regarded as peculiarly adapted to quiet the tumult among that class of people.—*Beckoned with the hand.* In order to silence the uproar, and gain a hearing.—*Made his defence.* Better, “apologized unto the people.” This object, as he was a Jew, apparently was to show the distinction between the Jews and the Christians, and to

attach the odium of the people wholly to the latter, and exonerate his brethren from any partnership with Paul. For, since the Christian cause emerged from the bosom of Judaism, the Ephesians, and Gentiles generally, making no very nice distinctions, confounded both in one. Chap. xvi. 20.

34. *Knew that he was a Jew.* As Jews and Christians were all one to them, and they supposed Alexander to be an apologist for Paul, they prevented his being heard by their deafening vociferations.—*The space of two hours.* Either because he repeatedly attempted to speak, or because it was a heathen custom to honor their divinities by long-continued cries. 1 Kings xviii. 26–28. These “vain repetitions” have been, in every age, an accompaniment of heathen rites.

35. *The town-clerk.* Modern readers are liable to get a wrong impression from this term, and to invest it with present associations. According to the functions which this officer is represented as discharging, he might be variously considered as a *recorder, chancellor, or secretary of state*; but no single term in our language can perfectly represent the office. He was evidently a magistrate of high dignity and authority.—*A worshipper.* The word,

36 and of the *image* which fell down from Jupiter? Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, 37 and to do nothing rashly. For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of 38 your goddess. Wherefore, if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies: let them implead one another. 39 But if ye inquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be

in the original, is an honorary title, applied to cities which were devoted to the worship of particular deities; thus, Ephesus was the worshipper, or devotee, of Diana, as if the whole city was but one in that respect. The word is found in inscriptions, and upon ancient coins, both of Ephesus and other places.—*The image which fell down from Jupiter.* The original image of Diana was a small statue of the goddess, made of elm or ebony, with many breasts, and carved by a sculptor called Canitias, and fable represented it as having fallen from heaven. The same legend was reported respecting the *Palladium*, or image of Minerva, at Troy; the *Ancilia*, or shields, of Mars, at Rome; the black stone, in the Caabah at Mecca, and also one in the Temple of the Sun at Baalbec. In some instances, these objects may have literally fallen from heaven in the form of meteoric stones, which have been known to descend from the skies, in all ages, in various parts of the world.

36, 37. *These things cannot be spoken against*, i. e. the facts he had stated could not be gainsaid; and they were not to be so faithless as to suppose that a handful of Jews could overthrow the magnificent worship of their goddess.—*To be quiet, &c.* They were to proceed with the assured confidence of strength, and to break out in no idle tumults, as if weak and distrustful of the goodness of their cause. As a further argu-

ment to calm their passions, he reminds them that there was nothing better than suspicion lying against the characters of these men.—*Robbers of churches.* For it could not be proved that they were sacrilegious persons, or had committed desecration upon the temple and holy things.—*Nor yet blasphemers, &c.* Nor had the apostle and his associates heaped opprobrium and abuse upon the Ephesian divinity or her holy ceremonies. Though it was the aim of the gospel to uproot idolatry, with all its abominations, yet it uttered no blasphemies or maledictions, but reproved, with truth and pity, the deluded victims of superstition and sin. Probably here, as at Athens, Paul had avoided giving unnecessary offence, or casting abuse upon what many held sacred.

38. *Have a matter.* Or, accusation.—*The law is open.* Or, rather, according to the Greek, “There are court days,” on which causes might be tried.—*There are deputies*, i. e. proconsuls, or judges, under whose jurisdiction trials might be held.—*Let them implead one another*, i. e. let them argue the case one against the other, and justice should be done.

39. *If ye inquire any thing, &c.* But if it were a different matter, not coming under the jurisdiction of courts, then let there be a popular assembly convened in a lawful manner, and properly constituted and organized for the despatch of such business. Such assemblies were held in the district to which Ephesus.

determined in a lawful assembly. For we are in danger to be 40 called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse. And when 41 he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly.

## CHAPTER XX.

*Paul passes through Greece, Macedonia, and Troas, and delivers his Farewell Discourse to the Elders of Ephesus at Miletus.*

AND after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced *them*, and departed for to go into Macedonia. And when he had gone over those parts, and had given 2

belonged, which are mentioned in ancient history.—*In a lawful assembly.* Rather, as the Greek, “In the regular assembly,”—for there was one stately held.

40. *In danger to be called in question, &c.* By their disorderly and riotous conduct, they had incurred the hazard of being arraigned as disturbers of the public peace,—a most heinous crime in the eyes of Rome; for it was her settled policy to maintain the most despotic and quiet sway over her dependent provinces; and she watched with jealous care the least outbreak among the people, lest they might discover their own strength, and throw off the yoke of bondage. There was a Roman law, —“Let him that raises a mob be punished with death.”

41. *He dismissed the assembly.* The Greek signifies an assembly, whether good or bad; but it is the same term which is often translated elsewhere, “church.” The remarks of the magistrate were judicious, and their success complete. The tempest lulled, and there was a calm.

The obstacles against which the gospel had to contend, upon its first introduction into the Gentile world, were neither few nor small. There was the rooted prejudice of ages against the Jews, with whom the Christian cause was confounded.

There were the pageantry and antiquity of idol-worship,—glittering temples, beautiful statues and paintings, magnificent and imposing ceremonies, and an interested priesthood. There were the bloody games, and licentious indulgences, which at once enervated and brutalized. There were the arts of superstition, and the wonders of magic, to deceive the simple and beguile the ignorant. There were philosophers that scorned, and rulers that hated, the apostles of the Lord. There were the populace to commit violence, and the powerful to commit wrong, against the men whom both parties abhorred as disturbers of the peace. But the gospel, despite all, gently, mightily, irresistibly, held on its course; and we live to see it, after so many centuries, no longer the scorn of the learned, or the victim of power, but riding upon the high places of the earth, and still going on, “conquering and to conquer;” carrying light and life to new nations, and spreading more widely, over the cold, dark earth, its warm, heavenly sunshine.

## CHAPTER XX.

1, 2. *Macedonia.* 1 Tim. i. 3. Paul pursues the course which he had before marked out. Chap. xix. 21. But he was probably hurried away earlier from Ephesus by the

3 them much exhortation, he came into Greece, and *there* abode three months. And when the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail into Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia. 4 And there accompanied him into Asia, Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus. 5 These going before, tarried for us at Troas. And we sailed away from Philippi, after the days of unleavened bread, 6 and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode 7 seven days. — And upon the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, (ready to depart on the morrow,) and continued his speech

uproar made by Demetrius and his partisans. He had spent, as is supposed, nearly three years in that city, chap. xix. 8, 10, and made many disciples. — *Over those parts*, i. e. the region thereabouts, in which he had before planted churches. 2 Cor. ii. 12, 13, vii. 5, 6. While in Macedonia, he is conjectured to have written the second epistle to the Corinthians, 2 Cor. viii. 1, 6, 16–19, 22, ix. 2–4, and despatched it by the hand of Titus. — *Greece*. The other Roman province of that region, equivalent to Achaea. Chap. xviii. 12, 27, xix. 21.

3. *Abode three months*. At Corinth, whence he is supposed to have sent his letter to the Romans. Rom. xv. 25, 26, xvi. 23; 1 Cor. i. 14; 2 Tim. iv. 20. — *Jews laid wait*. Actuated more by religious animosity than the hope of plundering Paul of the contributions to the poor, — a motive suggested by some. 2 Cor. viii. 1, 2, ix. 2. — *To return, &c.* Instead of taking a direct course to Syria from Corinth, by sea, he returns by a circuitous route on land, through Macedonia, to escape the plots of the Jews.

4, 5. *Accompanied*. Griesbach has punctuated the sentence so that this verb agrees only with Sopater, thus, — “And Sopater of Berea, son of

Pyrrhus, accompanied him into Asia,” adding, agreeably to the best authorities, the name of Sopater’s father, Pyrrhus. — *Sopater*. Or, perhaps, Sosipater, Rom. xvi. 21, a relative of Paul. — *Aristarchus*. See chap. xix. 29, xxvii. 2; Col. iv. 10, 11; Phil. 24. — *Gaius*. Chap. xix. 29; 1 Cor. i. 14. — *Tychicus*. Eph. vi. 21, 22; Col. iv. 7, 8; Tit. iii. 12. — *Trophimus*. Chap. xxi. 29; 2 Tim. iv. 20. — *These going before, &c.* They did not accompany Paul into Asia, but, going before, they stopped at Troas till he, with Sopater, ver. 4, and Luke, ver. 5, arrived; and then they accompanied him to Asia, or the province of which Ephesus was the capital. — *Us*. This incidental mention of Luke, the writer, as the companion of Paul, who had been dropped, at chap. xvi. 17, carries a certain air of genuineness. — *Troas*. Chap. xvi. 8, and note.

6. *After the days, &c.* Probably the occasion of their tarrying was to strengthen the church; and to wait, perhaps, until after the feast, during which the Jews were not allowed the use of leavened bread. — *In five days*. Occupied with the voyage across the Ægean Sea. Chap. xvi. 11, 12.

7. *The first day of the week*. This day appears to have been used by the apostles, instead of the Jews’

until midnight. And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together. And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep: and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead. And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him, said, 10 Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him. When he there- 11

Sabbath,—being the day of the resurrection of Jesus,—for the purposes of worship and communion. 1 Cor. xvi. 2; Rev. i. 10.—*To break bread.* To celebrate the Lord's supper, which seems, by the phraseology here used, to have been done weekly. —*Until midnight.* When it was interrupted by the fall of the young man; but was resumed, and continued until daybreak, ver. 11. The zeal and affection of both preacher and hearers were manifested by the length of the services. The discourse, however, was not, in all likelihood, continuous, but took rather the form of a conversation, in which questions were asked and answered.

8. *There were many lights.* Jowett, a modern missionary in this region, remarks, that “the very great plenty of oil in this neighborhood would enable them to afford many lights.” And again: “On entering my host's door, we find the ground-floor entirely used as a store; it is filled with large barrels of oil,—the produce of the rich country for many miles round.” He further observes, in relation to “the upper chamber,” that “the rooms on the second floor are very ordinary, and occupied by the family for their daily use; but on the next story all their expense is lavished; and in such an apartment Paul was invited to preach his parting discourse,—a secluded, spacious, and commodious room.”

9. *In a window.* This word is from *windore*, *wind-door*, a door for air and light. Such was its use in

the East, being a mere lattice-work, destitute of glass, which was not then used, and on a level with the floor, but generally projecting over the street. This would be open on account of the heat and large company.

—*The third loft.* Or, story.—*Taken up dead.* If the words are to be taken in their simple sense, his life was gone. The heat of many lamps, the numerous company, and the lateness of the hour, would naturally create drowsiness, even under the preaching of Paul. The natural laws of the human constitution will take effect, though the intentions and wishes of the mind are contrary to them. While much complaint is made of hearers sleeping through the most solemn services, it should not be forgotten that something ought to be pardoned to poor human nature, treated, as it too often is in public assemblies, with bad air, excessive heat or cold, and uncomfortable arrangements for light and sound.

10. *Fell on him.* 1 Kings, xvii. 21; 2 Kings, iv. 34. This was an act of tenderness, rather than a remedial application.—*His life is in him.* Mat. ix. 24; John xi. 11. Not that he was not dead, but his life was soon completely restored. It is the opinion, however, of some sensible expositors, that no miracle was wrought, his fall only throwing the young man into a swoon, or state of insensibility.

11, 12. *Broken bread, and eaten.* The eucharist, which would fitly con-

fore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and 12 talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed. And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little com-13 forted. — And we went before to ship, and sailed unto Assos, there intending to take in Paul: for so had he appointed, mind-14 ing himself to go afoot. And when he met with us at Assos, we 15 took him in, and came to Mitylene. And we sailed thence, and came the next *day* over against Chios; and the next *day* we arrived at Samos, and tarried at Trogylgium; and the next *day* 16 we came to Miletus. For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.

clude this earnest and affectionate interview. Ver. 7.—*Alive*. Or, as Bloomfield contends, “alive and well.” They had been thrown into great consternation by the fall and death of Eutychus, and were proportionally thankful and elated at his complete and miraculous restoration. The general air of this little narrative betokens an eye-witness.

13. *Went before*, i. e. in advance of Paul.—*Assos*. This was a small seaport in the Troad, or, as some say, in Mysia, upon the Ægean, about 20 miles south of the town of Troas. Ver. 5.—*To take in Paul*. Or, “to take him in again;” as they had sailed before with him from Philippi to Troas. Ver. 6.—*To go afoot*. This is one verb in Greek, and here means simply, to travel by land. The motive was to go upon a shorter route, and visit the inhabitants by the way, as we may conjecture without violence.

14. *Mitylene*. This city was the capital of Lesbos, an island lying at a short distance from the coast of Mysia, and about 30 or 40 miles south of Assos. It was distinguished for the splendor of its public edifices, and the culture of poetry and philosophy,—for it gave birth to Sappho,

the poetess; Pittacus, one of the Seven Sages of Greece; and many other celebrated persons. But it is now an insignificant place, under the Turks, called *Castro*.

15. *Chios*. Another island in the Ægean, about 50 miles south of Lesbos, lying against the Ionian coast, and remarkable for its fertility and beauty. It is now called *Scio*. In the Greek revolution, the Turks cruelly massacred about 60,000 out of 110,000 of the inhabitants, in cold blood; sold some 30,000 into slavery; and drove the remainder into exile, poverty, and despair. They reduced a paradise to a heap of smoking and blood-stained ruins.—*Samos*. This island is about 50 miles south-east of Chios. It was the birth-place of Pythagoras.—*Trogylgium*. The name of a town and promontory upon the continent, opposite Samos, at a few miles distance.—*Miletus*. Also called Miletum. A seaport upon the coast of Ionia, and its ancient capital. Thales, one of the Seven Wise Men of Greece, was a Milesian; and here was a famous temple of Apollo. It was 40 miles from Ephesus. The Turks call it *Melos*.

16, 17. *To sail by Ephesus*. This is often read wrong. *By* is emphatic.

And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders <sup>17</sup> of the church. And when they were come to him, he said unto <sup>18</sup> them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the <sup>19</sup> Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations, which beset me by the lying in wait of the Jews: *and 20* how I kept back nothing that was profitable *unto you*, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, *re- 21* pentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

He did not intend to take Ephesus on his route, but to sail *by*, past it, and take a nearer course.—*Into Asia*, i. e. the province so called, in which Ephesus was situated.—*The day of Pentecost*. This great festival would enable him to address his countrymen to better advantage, and relieve the poor to whom he was carrying a contribution, and to advance the Christian cause.—*Called the elders, &c.* See note on chap. xi. 30. Elders and bishops, or overseers, were synonymous terms at that time, as is manifest from a comparison of ver. 17 with ver. 28, and of Phil. i. 1; 1 Tim. iii. 2, with ver. 8; Titus i. 7; and were used to describe those who were appointed as superintendents or presidents over the early churches, without their duties being very technically determined. There is no evidence that any other officers of the church were present at that time, except those of Ephesus.

18. *Asia*. The district of Asia Minor, so called.—*After what manner I have been with you, &c.* Or, how I have behaved among you. The fearless confidence with which he called attention to his conduct gave assurance of a true man; while the earnestness of his appeal identified Paul. His motive was not vain-glory, but to do good, by repelling the charges of his enemies. 1 Thes. i. 5.

19. *With all humility*. Or, lowliness of mind. Though endowed with miraculous powers, and called to a great work and authority, he yet did not lord it over their faith, or abuse his station by arrogance and pride.—*Many*. Is omitted by Griesbach.—*Temptations*. Better, trials.—*By the lying in wait*. By the machinations.—*The Jews*. Most of his troubles arose from his countrymen. The wide and unshackled privileges of the gospel ill suited those who were ready to cry out that they were the children of Abraham, and who could see nothing good in a Gentile until he had pronounced their *shibboleth*.

20, 21. *Kept back nothing*. His aim was not to preach what they liked, but what they needed,—the true model of a preacher of righteousness.—*From house to house*. He was not content merely to deliver discourses in the public assembly, and dispense with other instrumentalities, but zealously pursued his great work in private, from house to house, and literally carried *home* the truth of heaven to the hearths and hearts of the Ephesians.—*Both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks*. The same doctrine essentially was needed by one as by the other. Their sins might assume different forms, but the interior purification and spiritualization of the character were to be effected by the same celestial agency,

22 And now behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not  
23 knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the  
Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, that bonds and af-  
24 fictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither  
count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course  
with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord

whether in the case of the formalist and bigot, or the sensualist and idolater.—*Repentance toward God.* Some critics view this as the peculiar duty of the Gentiles, to turn from their idolatry to the faith and worship of one God; but repentance would seem to cover all that ground, and more, and to be imperative on the erring Jew as well as on the heathen; for all had sinned, and come short of the glory of God.—*Faith toward our Lord, &c.* So of faith; it was the part of a consistent Jew to believe in the Messiah, whom his lawgiver and prophets had predicted for a thousand years,—to welcome the nearer and tenderer revelation of God in his Son; yet the Gentile also was required not only to turn from the polluted shrines of idolatry to the worship of the Most High, but to draw nigh to the Saviour of the world. The majestic simplicity of the apostle's preaching, and the total emphasis which he threw upon the chief doctrines and duties of the gospel, ought not to pass unobserved.

22, 23. *Bound in the spirit*, i. e.—according to the opinion of the best critics,—“impelled in mind,” prompted by his own, not the Holy Spirit. Chap. xviii. 5.—*Not knowing the things, &c.* What a touching expression of his ignorance is here made by the apostle, who none the less heroically pursued the path of duty because unknown dangers beset it, and because he had to conflict with actual trials, and, what is even harder, with the apprehension of

trials to come.—*The Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city.* Chap. ix. 16. As he passed from city to city, he was continually admonished, by divine warnings, that he would be persecuted and imprisoned, upon his arrival at Jerusalem, where he would encounter an even more formidable opposition from his countrymen than he had experienced in the Gentile cities. As an illustration of this clause, see chap. xxi. 4, 11. The faith which sustained him and his associates is vividly portrayed in 2 Cor. iv. 8–11. It is observed, by Paley, that there is an incidental coincidence with this passage, significant of reality and truth, in Rom. xv. 30, 31.

24. *None of these things move me.* Or, literally, “I make account of nothing,” or, make no account of these things.—*Finish my course.* Or, race,—in reference to the ancient games. Chap. xiii. 25; 2 Tim. iv. 7.

—*The gospel of the grace of God.* The gospel, gracious to the Gentiles as to the Jews, and showing the impartial favor of God. Doddridge well remarks upon this verse, that “It adds great beauty to this, and all the other passages of Scripture in which the apostles express their contempt of the world, that they were not uttered by persons, like Seneca and Antoninus, in the full affluence of its enjoyment, but by men under the pressure of the greatest calamities, who were every day exposing their lives for the sake of God, and in the expectation of a happy immortality.”

Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now be 25 hold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I 26 take you to record this day, that I *am* pure from the blood of all 27 *men*, for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel 28 of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the

25. *I know.* This expresses not absolute certainty, but assured persuasion. — *Shall see my face no more.* He was bound on a dangerous journey, and it was probable that he would never see them again. Whether he afterwards visited Ephesus, or not, is matter of doubtful inference; though critics have conjectured that he revisited this region. See Phil. i. 25—27; ii. 24; Philemon, 22.

26. *I take you to record.* A solemn appeal to their testimony. — *Pure from the blood of all men.* Or, better, “of all;” or, of you all,—as *men* is not in the original, and *you* may be understood. With fidelity he had discharged his responsible office, and if they perished in their sins, he had cleared himself of all accountableness for their fall. Ezek. xxxiii. 4—6.

27. *Have not shunned to declare,* &c. This indicated how he had fulfilled his high duty, viz.: by a full and fearless proclamation of the truth, and the whole truth, of the gospel,—even that unpalatable doctrine, that Gentiles, without submitting to the yoke of Moses, were entitled to all the privileges and promises of the Christian faith.

28. *Take heed therefore unto yourselves.* This was their first duty, without the performance of which they would in vain attempt to benefit the flock. The cultivation of personal goodness is the essential preliminary condition to a useful ministry. — *Overseers.* The original is “*bishops*,” as translated in Phil. i. 1; 1 Tim. iii. 2; Titus i. 7; 1 Pet. ii. 25;

— and, to preserve uniformity of phraseology, it should have been so rendered here. The identity of these officers with *presbyters* or *elders*, at that early period, is shown by a comparison of this verse with ver. 17. It is a sad wresting of the rectitude and simplicity of the divine-word, to attempt, by strained inferences, to fasten upon the church of the apostolic age all the orders of modern Episcopacy and Papacy. The different offices sprang up spontaneously, as they were wanted; chap. vi. 1—6; and names taken from Judaism, taken from existing society, were used to describe them, not technically and rigidly, but freely, popularly, and variously. “To attempt to make out from these primitive institutions any nice system which shall be adapted to modern wants, and conform to modern ideas, is to mistake altogether the nature of all primitive institutions, which are essentially provisional, extemporaneous, informal, and changeable.” — *The church of God.* Or, as it should be read, “the church of the Lord,” referring to Christ; for, by his sufferings and death, his life and doctrines, he had redeemed a church of believers from the sin and idolatry of the world. That the true reading in the original Greek is *Lord*, and not *God*, is substantiated, with but few exceptions, by those who would be most interested in employing this as a proof-text for the support of their faith, viz., Trinitarian commentators; but they have shown how much more they are interested for

flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw

the truth than for a party. Thus Kuinoel says, "The true reading, beyond all doubt, is the *church of the Lord*; and this has been adopted by Grotius, Wetstein, Le Clerc, Griesbach, and all the most skilful critics of the present age." Michaelis remarks, that "the reading, *God*, has hitherto been found in but few manuscripts; and among those, none is of high, or even of considerable, antiquity. I confess that, on impartial attention to the evidence, I dare not adopt it as the true and genuine reading." Smith: "I must acknowledge, that to me the preponderance of evidence appears in favor of the last reading, *the church of the Lord*." Olshausen: "According to the critical authorities, it is not possible to maintain the genuineness of that (the common) reading." Rosenmuller: "The true reading seems to be, *of the Lord*. In the Nestorian controversy, many affirmed, that nowhere in the sacred Scriptures occurs the expression, *blood of God*;" (which would be, indeed, a most violent and unwarrantable metaphor.) Davidson: "On the whole, I am inclined to adopt *the Lord*, as the probable reading. It is best supported by external evidence; and the internal is, at least, equally strong with that for *God*." Marsh: "Polemical divinity must be totally separated from sacred criticism; for a reading is not rendered spurious by its opposition to an established creed, nor genuine by their agreement. The only business of a critic is impartially to weigh the evidence which may be brought for, or against, a reading, and to determine on that side on which the

scale preponderates. Now, that Wetstein has acted agreeably to this principle in preferring *Lord* to *God*, no man, who transgresses not the bounds of truth, can deny." Barnes: "The most ancient manuscripts and the best, read *the church of the Lord*, and this probably was the genuine text." The Abbots: "In all the most ancient copies of the New Testament, and those most to be relied upon for correctness, it reads, 'the church of *the Lord*, which,' &c. Morus, Nares, Pearce, Newcome, Hill, Holden, Wardlaw, Middleton, Limborch, Wall, Pyle, Williams, might be cited, to show that they regarded the received text as either doubtful or spurious; while Bloomfield, and several others, either contend for the genuineness of the text, or for a similar reading. But Trinitarian criticism, to say nothing of other sects, greatly preponderates in favor of the reading, *the church of the Lord*. — *Purchased with his own blood*. The costliness of the sacrifices which Christ made for the establishment of his religion,—even to death, the death of the cross,—is adduced as an argument for fidelity in the officers of the church. The doctrine of a vicarious atonement finds no support in passages like the present, for it is popular language. Emphasis is laid upon *the blood*, *the death*, *the cross*, of Christ, because he thus showed his love; and because his death, and the subsequent events, proved him to be a spiritual Messiah, and not the temporal one expected by the Jews.

29, 30. The apostle here assigns a twofold reason why they should

away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, 31 that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you 32 to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. 33 Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto 34

take heed both to themselves and to the flock, because dangers would press upon them from without, and corruptions spring up within. There would be persecutors that would assault the church with the ferocity of wild beasts, and false teachers that would seduce the disciples from the simplicity of the gospel, — some seeking to mix Christianity with Judaism, and others to blend it with Gentile philosophy. — *Wolves.* Mat. vii. 15, x. 16. — *Speaking perverse things, &c.* The object of the schismatics who thus broke in upon the purity and tranquillity of the church, would be to gain adherents, and make a party of their own; and, to effect this, they would not hesitate to pervert the truth. The irruption into the Christian body, in general, of such a class of persons, is hinted at in various passages of the New Testament. 1 Cor. i. 11—13; Phil. iii. 2; 1 Tim. i. 19, 20, iv. 1—3; 2 Tim. i. 13; 1 John ii. 18, 19; 3 John, 9; Rev. ii. 6, 15.

31. *Therefore watch.* The legitimate conclusion from the announcement before made, ver. 29, 30, of impending dangers. — *Three years.* A statement of time in round numbers. Comp. chap. xix. 8, 10, 22. — *With tears.* Stern as was his nature when a persecutor of the church, and daring as was his course after he became a Christian, Paul was yet a man of the tenderest sensibility, — as his Epistles testify, in passages overflowing with feeling, and filled with the kindest messages to his friends.

More sweetly do his words strike upon our hearts, because they were baptized with tears, — tears of grief, and tears, perhaps, of joy, — tears of anguish, and tears of gratitude. We read him no longer as Paul the apostle, but as Paul the affectionate friend, the loving brother, with whom we might have sympathized, and dropped tear for tear.

32. *To God, and to the word of his grace.* Or, his gracious word or doctrine, the gospel. The use of God, in connexion with something else distinct from God, will help explain, in some degree, the phraseology of Mat. xxviii. 19. — *To give you an inheritance, &c.* The privileges of the Christian body here, and the inheritance hereafter. — *Sanctified.* Holy, pure; those who are prepared to possess and enjoy such an inheritance. 2 Cor. xiii. 13.

33, 34. *Coveted no man's silver, &c.* He disclaims avarice now, as he disclaimed pride and self-interest before. Ver. 19, 24. He would quicken their benevolence and fidelity, by reminding them, not in vain-glory, but self-vindication, of the tears he had shed, and the toils he had undergone, for their sakes. He had not sought their's, but them; not the fleece, but the flock. They had been bought with a great price, and ought not lightly to throw themselves away. — *Apparel.* A great item of oriental wealth. — *These hands.* As if holding them up to view, hardened with labor. He had not only supported himself, but helped others to the

35 my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he 36 said, It is more blessed to give than to receive. — And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all.

bread of earth as well as the bread of heaven. Chap. xviii. 3; 1 Sam. xii. 3-5; 1 Cor. iv. 12; 1 Thes. ii. 9; 2 Thes. iii. 8-10.

35. *Showed you all things.* Given you full instructions. — *To support the weak.* Who are understood by some to be the spiritually weak, who might easily take offence, and fall from their Christian profession, if not tenderly borne with, and every occasion of sin removed. But the obvious sense is the best, viz., the poor, sick, feeble. — *The words of the Lord.* Much of his teaching passed away unrecorded. John xxi. 25. But we have here an interesting fragment recovered from oblivion, which, like the broken piece of some splendid work of ancient art, a *torso* of sculpture, betokens, without fail, "the great Master," and harmonizes in spirit with his recorded history and discourses. — *It is more blessed to give than to receive.* Though this maxim reverses the standard of the world, yet it is verified in the experience of every moral being. It is, as heart and life testify, more blessed to give than to receive; to gratify a disinterested than a selfish feeling; to open one's heart to a large and generous benevolence, than to contract it into a narrow circle of mere personal interest, — a prison-house of self. This declaration embodies, therefore, a great moral law of our being, true in all ages, nations, souls, and illustrated in the happiness of myriads of one class, as in the wretchedness of myriads of the opposite class. Though it may sound like a paradox, yet God has so constructed the world, and so constituted

man, that, by suffering, he enjoys; by giving, he is blessed; by sacrificing, he gains; and, by dying, he truly lives. So taught, and so lived, and died, earth's only Blessed One. While, as has been beautifully said by Olshausen, "In an absolute sense, the saying is fully verified in the relation of the Creator to the creature; for God is the Blessed, because he alone gives all things to all beings."

"The reader, who possesses a heart of true Christian sensibility, will not fail to be affected by the manner in which the most sublime, and also the most delicate and tender, traits of the Christian character, are blended in the expression of this solemn farewell. We see in it a strong assertion of conscious rectitude, made in a spirit of humility and lowliness of mind; a determined and undaunted courage, tinged with the depression and sadness awakened by dark forebodings of future danger; and feelings of peaceful and quiet happiness, beaming through, and overcoming mournful recollections of the past, and the sadness of a final separation. Thus the tender sensibilities, and the calm but indomitable courage and energy of the great apostle's character, are here seen in a combination which Christianity alone is able to produce."

36. *Prayed with them.* Like the farewell address of the Saviour to his disciples, — of which we are reminded, both by its contrasts and its resemblances, — the spirit mounts up, at the conclusion, to Him who is pleased to have his children love one another, and who can sustain them in the hour of mortal trial and

And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, <sup>37</sup> sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they <sup>38</sup> should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.

## CHAPTER XXI.

*Paul sails from Miletus to Cesarea, and proceeds to Jerusalem. The Uproar among the People, and his Arrest by the Chief Captain.*

AND it came to pass, that after we were gotten from them, and had launched, we came with a straight course unto Coos, and the day following unto Rhodes, and from thence unto Pa-

anguish with a help the world cannot give or take away.

37, 38. *That they should see his face no more.* This was the last drop in the full cup of their grief, which made it run over. It was the last time. They would see him no more. That struck a tender chord in each heart, and "tears unbidden flow." We cannot but observe how holy is this tie of spiritual interest, this clasping of soul with soul, and heartfelt recognition of human brotherhood. But a few years before, and what was Paul to the elders of Ephesus—or the elders of Ephesus to Paul? They knew not, cared not, for one another. But they imbibe the spirit of Jesus; they catch a glimpse of the hallowed ties that unite man to man, and man to God; and, lo, they are new creatures; they are born, spiritually born, into a new universe. They look upon each other with different eyes, and feel that their connexion is no coarse or common one; but that it has been made in heaven, that it is knit by the fingers of God, and will last evermore. How changed their interest in one another, and in the mass of men! What a different spectacle does the world present to their sanctified vision! It is no longer a mere stage for the warrior to play his bloody part,—an amphitheatre with

wild beasts,—an arena for the selfish strivings of men; but, in very deed, the world of God,—lighted up by him, pervaded by his presence, alive with his wisdom and active love, and swarming with beings near and dear to the mighty Parent. Thus, they taste a new delight, and enjoy a newly-created sense. They are now men, brethren, and feel for one another. They may be sundered by the events of this life, and see one another no more; but they now know—sublime assurance!—that man's true life is beyond this little span of being, and they have "a hope built in heaven."

## CHAPTER XXI.

1. *Were gotten from them.* Or, had torn ourselves away, implying the strong cords of affection which bound them together.—*Coos.* This was one of the Sporades, a group of islands in the *Ægean Sea*, small, but fertile, and distinguished for its wines, silks, and cottons. Its present name is *Stan Co*, or *Stanchio*. Paul was now on his voyage to Palestine, carrying contributions from Macedonia and Greece to the destitute Christians of Judea.—*Rhodes.* Another island to the south-east of Coos, celebrated for its Temple of the Sun and immense Colossus, and also belonging to the Sporades; it

2 *Tara*: and finding a ship sailing over unto Phenicia; we went 3 aboard, and set forth. Now when we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand, and sailed into Syria, and landed at 4 *Tyre*: for there the ship was to unlade her burden. And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul 5 through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem. And when we had accomplished those days, we departed, and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till *we were* out of the city: and we kneeled down on 6 the shore, and prayed. And when we had taken our leave one 7 of another, we took ship; and they returned home again. And when we had finished *our* course from *Tyre*, we came to *Ptolemais*, and saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day.

took its name from the abundance of roses growing in the island. The *Colossus* was one of the seven wonders of the world. It was a stupendous image of Apollo, made of brass, with its feet upon the two moles at the entrance of the harbor, and with space between its legs for ships to pass through under full sail. It was one hundred and five feet high, and well proportioned in every part. It was ascended by a winding staircase, and the top commanded an extensive prospect. *Chares*, the artist, employed twelve years in its construction. B. C. 300. After standing erect for fifty or sixty years, it was thrown down by an earthquake, and, in the time of Paul, and many centuries after, it remained in ruins; but, in A. D. 672, it was sold by the Saracens to a Jew of Edessa, who loaded nine hundred camels with the brass, which was estimated to weigh 720,000 pounds. — *Patara*. This was a seaport of Lysia, containing a remarkable oracle of Apollo.

2. *Finding a ship*. They apparently depended upon transient vessels. — *Phenicia*. A country north of Palestine.

3. *Cyprus*. Chap. iv. 36. — *Syria*. Which included Phenicia and also

the whole of Palestine. — *Tyre*. The great city of Phenicia, famous for its commerce, wealth, and luxury.

4. *Tarried there seven days*. Because they found disciples. Chap. xi. 19. — *Through the spirit*. Moved, as it would appear, by their Christian feelings; though, if it had been an express revelation to them from God of his trials, yet the apostle would be at liberty to go, or stay, as would best advance the cause of truth. Jesus foresaw his death, but still advanced to meet it. — *That he should not go, &c.* On account of the danger of persecution by the Jews. Ver. 11, 12; chap. xx. 22, 23.

5, 6. The affectionate respect every where paid to Paul, clearly showed how highly his labors and sacrifices had been appreciated by the disciples. The graphic description of the parting scene indicated the presence of the writer, as is expressed by the use of the first person plural. — *With wives and children*. These belonged to the Tyrians, not to Paul and his company.

7. *Ptolemais*. — A city of Palestine, on the Mediterranean, about thirty miles south of *Tyre*, and near Mount Carmel. Its ancient name was *Acco*, Judg. i. 31, but it re-

And the *next day* we that were of Paul's company departed, and <sup>8</sup> came unto Cesarea; and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was *one* of the seven; and *abode* with him. And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did <sup>9</sup> prophesy. — And as we tarried *there* many days, there came <sup>10</sup> down from Judea a certain prophet, named Agabus. And when <sup>11</sup> he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver *him* into the hands of the Gentiles. And when we <sup>12</sup> heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, What <sup>13</sup> mean ye to weep, and to break my heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, <sup>14</sup>

ceived the name of Ptolemais from Ptolemy, the first king of Egypt, and, in the time of the crusades, it was called Acre, or St. Jean d'Acre, from a magnificent church dedicated to St. John. It has been the perpetual theatre of war, constituting as it does the key of Syria; and, even within a few years, it was drenched in blood in the war between Egypt and Turkey; and, in 1840, in a contest between the allied English and Austrian fleets and the troops of Muhammed Aly, a magazine exploded and killed the garrison, and laid the town in ruins. Robinson now calls it 'Akka.

8, 9. *Cesarea.* Chap. viii. 40. — *Philip, the Evangelist.* See chap. vi, 5, and chap. viii. 26—40. The term Evangelist signified a preacher who had the care of no single church, but preached the gospel from place to place. — *One of the seven*, i. e. deacons, as generally called. Chap. vi. 3—5. — *Which did prophesy.* Or, discharge the office of Christian teachers, either with or without the special guidance of the Spirit. Chap. vii. 17.

10. *Agabus.* See chap. xi. 28.

11. *Took Paul's girdle, &c.* An emblematic action, of which there are several specimens in the New Testament as well as the Old. John xiii. 12—14, xx. 22. — *Thus saith the Holy Ghost*, i. e. a revelation was shown him by God of what would befall the apostles. Still it was left optional with him to encounter these dangers or not.

12, 13. *Besought him not to go up.* Mat. xvi. 22. If there had been a positive command to go, obedience would be necessary; but he was left free. — *To weep and break my heart.* He had a solemn duty which he determined to do, and therefore deprecated the intercessions of his friends, which only distracted his mind, and harrowed up his feelings, when he needed the full strength of his resolution, and encouragement rather than dissuasion. — *I am ready, &c.* This noble courage he elsewhere expressed, and always exhibited, until at last he fell a martyr to the cause of Christ. 2 Cor. xii. 15. — *The name*, i. e. the gospel, the religion of Jesus.

14. *The will of the Lord be done.* They ceased from further expostula-

15 saying, The will of the Lord be done. — And after those days  
 16 we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem. There  
 went with us also *certain* of the disciples of Cesarea, and brought  
 with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we  
 should lodge.

17 And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received  
 18 us gladly. And the *day* following Paul went in with us unto  
 19 James: and all the elders were present. And when he had  
 saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had  
 20 wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry. And when they  
 heard *it*, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest,  
 brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe,

tion, and acquiesced in his determination, only praying that the will of God might be done, — that, whatever course was taken, the divine pleasure might be furthered. In trial, doubt, and fear, what a blessed support, to fall back upon the arm of the Father, and feel it underneath us.

15. *We took up our carriages.* All one participle in Greek, rendered by many, “taking up our baggage, or making ourselves ready;” for there is no reference whatever to “carriages,” in the modern sense of that word; but it was used in the time of our translators to signify what was carried. 1 Sam. xvii. 22; Is. x. 28. The better version, however, in accordance with the sense of the original, is that of Palfrey, Robinson, and others, “divesting ourselves of our baggage,” perhaps leaving part of it behind, as a needless incumbrance.

16. *Brought with them one Mnason, &c.* The latter part of this verse would be better expressed thus: “Bringing us to Mnason, of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge.” Mnason was not their fellow-traveller, but they were conducted to his house to lodge. Hospitality was an urgent duty of that trying period. — *An old disciple.* Not, per-

haps, in age, but in time of profession — being, as some suppose, a convert of Christ during his ministry.

17. *Come to Jerusalem.* For the previous journeys of Paul to Jerusalem, after his conversion, see chap. ix. 26, xi. 30, xv. 4, xviii. 21, 22. — *Received us gladly.* Their successful labors, the contributions they brought from distant churches to relieve the poor at Jerusalem, and their safe arrival, all produced a glow of warm and friendly gladness.

18, 19. *James.* The stationary and principal officer of the church at Jerusalem. The other apostles were doubtless absent. — *The elders.* The wise and eminent of the church, who assisted in its affairs and instruction. Chap. xi. 30. It appears to have been a public meeting of the leading men of the body. — *Particularly.* Or, “each one singly;” he specified one place after another, and his success in each. He gave this account, in some measure, as a justification against his enemies, and proof that he enjoyed the approbation of God.

20. *Glorified the Lord.* They were not envious at his success, but praised the Most High for the favor with which his servant had been attended. — *How many thousands.* Literally, “myriads, tens of thousands.”

and they are all zealous of the law: and they are informed of 21 thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying, That they ought not to circumcise *their* children, neither to walk after the customs. What is 22 it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come. Do therefore this that we say to 23 thee: We have four men which have a vow on them; them take, 24 and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave *their* heads: and all may know that those things whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but

Chap. ii. 41, iv. 4. During the period of nearly twenty-five years, since the conversion of Paul, the converts had very much increased in the holy city. — *All zealous of the law.* They were Jewish Christians, and believed in the perpetuity of the Mosaic law, and were zealous of its observance, the more so as they felt that it was in danger of being superseded. In fact, the Jewish ritual was naturally observed, even by the Christian converts, until the fall of the city and temple rendered its longer fulfilment, in a great measure, impracticable. Whitby quotes various authors to show how intense was the zeal of the Jews in general for their law, and that they would rather die than forfeit their character as its faithful observers.

21, 22. The long imprisonment of Paul at Jerusalem and elsewhere, and his being sent to Rome, were of so much consequence in his history, that Luke gives a minute account of the events which caused his first arrest. — *To forsake Moses.* In Greek, “apostasy from Moses.” — *The customs,* i. e. of sacrifices, festivals, and observances of the Mosaic ritual. The falsity of these rumors was very plain, when it was remembered that Paul had circumcised Timothy, observed a Jewish vow, and had now come to Jerusalem to attend one of the great national feasts. Chap. xvi.

3, xviii. 18, xx. 16. Besides, what he had taught respecting the non-observance of the law, had been to the Gentiles, not to the Jews, agreeably to the apostolic decrees of chap. xv. 28, 29. He yielded something to his countrymen for their zeal for old institutions, since he had himself felt it, and would therefore do nothing to break the bonds of Christian charity, or cause the weakest brother to offend or fall. Rom. xiv.; 1 Cor. ix. 20. But these malicious reports had, as is usual, rather gained than lost, in their circulation from tongue to tongue, and the apostle found himself charged with the gravest offences against the devout feelings of his nation. — *What is it, &c.* What must be done? — *The multitude must needs come together.* There would be a tumultuous meeting of the people at large as soon as it was known that Paul was in Jerusalem.

23, 24. *Do, therefore, this.* For the sake of conciliation, and to show practically that he did not despise the law. However laudable was the motive, the expedient did not succeed, but proved the occasion of the subsequent tumult. Their words were clearly those of advice, not of command. — *We have four men.* It seems, the men were disciples of their community. — *Have a vow upon them.* Vows were frequent among the Jews, especially what was called the vow

25 *that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law.* As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written *and* concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from *things* offered to idols, and from blood, and from 26 *things* strangled, and from fornication. — Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them, entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them.

27 And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews, which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the

of the Nazarite, Num. vi., which was probably the one here meant. Josephus, speaking of a vow made by Bernice, says, "It is customary for those who have been afflicted with some distemper, or have labored under any other difficulties, to make a vow, thirty days before they offer sacrifices, to abstain from wine, and shave the hair of their head." The time, however, varied according to the will of the subject. — *Purify thyself, &c.*, i. e. observe the precept of abstinence from wine, and other things; keep thyself pure, according to the vow. — *Be at charges with them.* There were some heavy expenses incurred by the Nazarite, for sacrifices of various kinds; and, in accordance with the usual practice of rendering pecuniary aid on such occasions, which was deemed an act of great piety, they propose to Paul to give his assistance in the present instance, and thus vindicate his name from aspersions. — *That they may shave, &c.* As shaving the hair was the final act of the vow, this phrase came to stand for its completion. Thus Josephus says, that, when Herod Agrippa came to Jerusalem to assume the kingdom, "he offered up sacrifices of thanksgiving, and omitted nothing that was prescribed by the law. For which reason, he also ordered a good number of Nazarites to be shaved," or

aided them to make the necessary offerings, and complete their vow. — *Walkest orderly, &c.* This would be a practical demonstration of the apostle's respect for Jewish usages which could not be gainsaid.

25. They here make the reasonable exception in favor of the Gentile converts, and refer to the letter missive which had been sent out with that purport. Chap. xv. 20, 29.

26. *Paul took the men, &c.* He hearkened to their advice, for the sake of conciliation and the correction of false and slanderous reports. In thus doing, he compromised no principle, but yielded to a usage he knew was not essential, for the good of others and of the church. It was a case of what might be called Christian expediency. Paul took on him the vow for seven days, ver. 27, kept himself pure from all things unclean, entered into the temple, and signified his purpose to the priests, and informed them when the vow would be completed, and it would be proper to make the needful offerings for each person. The sacrifices are detailed in Num. vi. 13-17.

27. *Seven days.* Chap. xxiv. 1, 11. — *The Jews which were of Asia.* Not of Asia Minor, but of that portion of it called Proconsular Asia, of which Ephesus was the capital, and the inhabitants of which would be likely to

people, and laid hands on him, crying out, Men of Israel, help. 28 This is the man that teacheth all *men* every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further, brought Greeks also into the temple; and hath polluted this holy place. (For 29 they had seen before with him in the city, Trophimus, an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.) And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: 30 and they took Paul and drew him out of the temple. And forthwith the doors were shut. And as they went about to kill him, 31 tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusa-

recognize one from their own city.  
Ver. 29.

28. *Men of Israel, help.* A short watchword to rouse the populace.—*Against the people, &c.* It is easy to see how the disinterested labors of the apostle, for the salvation of the Gentiles, had been tortured into these black charges; though he had not spoken against the people, unless it were for their bigotry and exclusiveness; nor against the law, except that it was not binding upon Gentile disciples, nor in itself of eternal obligation upon the Jews; nor against that place, except to teach that pure worship was acceptable to God, wherever offered, and that, for her sins, the holy city already tottered to her fall.—*Brought Gentiles also into the temple.* This was a most criminal offence, punishable with death. There was a court of the Gentiles, so called, within the precincts of the temple, into which they were allowed free admittance; but, beyond that, into the holy place, or court of the Israelites, they were not suffered to penetrate, and inscriptions were written upon the pillars, in the current languages, forbidding any but a Jew to cross the fatal threshold, as being unclean, and tending to desecrate the sanctuary of the Most High.—*This holy place.* This was an interior court, in which some of the sacred things of the temple, as the

altar of incense, golden table and candlesticks, were deposited and used. The Gentiles were not allowed to enter this, nor the *chel* or inclosure before it. Philo says that it was certain death for any one, who was not a Jew, to set his foot within the inner courts of the temple.

29. *Trophimus.* Chap. xx. 4.—*Supposed.* This word is emphatic. They supposed that to be done which was not done in reality; and, on the strength of mere conjecture, convulsed the whole city, and beset the innocent apostle, to put him to death. Griesbach, as well as the received text, makes this verse parenthetical, as it is simply thrown in by way of explanation of ver. 28.

30. *The people ran.* Descriptive of a mob, its haste, and headlong zeal.—*Drew him out.* Paul had entered in for the fulfilment of a religious duty, and the people then drew him out of the temple that they might not further desecrate it by the blood of the offender, which they were about to shed.—*The doors were shut.* To keep out of the sacred places the violence of the people, and the pollution of blood, as well as to exclude Paul and his associates.

31. *About to kill him.* Not legally, or morally, but in the rage of ungovernable feelings. A Gentile, penetrating the sacred edifice beyond the allotted point, was liable to be sum-

32 lem was in an uproar ; who immediately took soldiers and centu-  
rions, and ran down unto them. And when they saw the chief  
33 captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul. Then the  
chief captain came near and took him, and commanded *him* to  
be bound with two chains : and demanded who he was, and what  
34 he had done. And some cried one thing, some another, among  
the multitude : and when he could not know the certainty for  
the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle.  
35 And when he came upon the stairs, so it was that he was borne  
36 of the soldiers, for the violence of the people. For the multi-  
37 tude of the people followed after, crying, Away with him. And  
as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief  
captain, May I speak unto thee ? Who said, Canst thou speak  
38 Greek ? Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days

marily put to death ; and the people  
proceeded to inflict the same pun-  
ishment on Paul, for having been in-  
strumental, as they said, of conduct-  
ing in a Gentile. — *Chief captain of  
the band.* A Roman officer, or trib-  
une, usually in command of one thou-  
sand men, according to his title,  
*Miliarch.* He was in charge of the  
garrison in the citadel of Antonia,  
near the temple. It appears, from  
chap. xxiii. 26, that his name was  
Claudius Lysias. Had he not inter-  
posed, Paul, probably, would have  
perished in the mob. Chap. xxiii. 27.

32. *They left beating.* They were  
arrested in their murderous purposes  
by the strong arm of Roman pow-  
er. The Jews were so turbulent,  
especially upon the great festival oc-  
casion, that a large military force was  
always kept in readiness, near at  
hand, to repress popular tumults.

33. *Bound with two chains.* Ver.  
11, chap. xii. 6. To give the fierce  
populace assurance that the prisoner  
would be kept in safety, and to se-  
cure him for further trial. He ap-  
pears, also, to have bound Paul, un-  
der the impression that he was a fa-  
mous insurgent of the times. Ver. 38.

34. *A vivid portrait of a mob.* See

chap. xix. 32, and note. — *The castle.*  
Of Antonia, situated north of the tem-  
ple, originally erected by the Macca-  
bees, and called Baris, but rebuilt by  
Herod the Great, with much splen-  
dor and many conveniences, for the  
soldiers stationed in it, and named  
after Mark Antony. Its strength as  
a fortress was great, and it was so  
situated as to command the temple.

35. *Stairs.* From the outer court  
of the temple, to ascend to the castle.  
— *He was borne of the soldiers.* To  
escape the fury of the populace, the  
soldiers took Paul up and carried  
him.

36, 37. *Away with him*, i. e. to put  
him to death, either by a riotous as-  
sault, or a regular execution. Mat-  
xxvii. 22, 23 ; John xix. 15. — *Canst  
thou speak Greek ?* Paul addressed  
him in that language, which sur-  
prised him, as he supposed him to be  
an Egyptian. Ver. 38. The officer  
himself was probably a Greek, from  
his name, Lysias, and from his hav-  
ing purchased Roman citizenship.  
Chap. xxii. 28.

38. *That Egyptian, &c.* Josephus  
relates a similar history, that serves  
very strongly to corroborate this  
statement. He mentions this Egyp-

madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers? But Paul said, I am a man <sup>39</sup> which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and I beseech thee suffer me to speak unto the people. And when he had given him license, Paul stood on the <sup>40</sup> stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue, saying,

tian — a Jew, from Egypt — as is supposed, twice: once in his Jewish Wars, and once in his Antiquities, though he differs respecting the number of his followers in the two narratives — in one stating them to be thirty thousand, and that a great number of those with him were either slain or taken prisoners; and in the other, that there were four hundred slain, and two hundred taken prisoners, which would be but a small part of thirty thousand, the leader himself escaping. But Lardner, copying from Ward, reconciles Josephus with Luke and with himself, by supposing that the "four thousand" of this verse were from Jerusalem, and were joined in the wilderness by others, making in all thirty thousand, according to the Jewish historian; and that the most of these dispersed upon the approach of danger, and that the party which fled in company with their leader, or, as Josephus says, "were with the Egyptian," had four hundred killed and two hundred seized as prisoners. Having reconciled these variances, Lardner remarks that the accounts agree in the use of the term, *the Egyptian, or that Egyptian*; in the time, as during the government of *Felix* over Judea; in the fact that the rebel *led* his troops out into the *wilderness*, "persuading a good number of the meaner sort of people to follow him," under promise that the walls of Jerusalem would fall at his command, and entrance be given him into the city; and that,

when attacked by the troops of *Felix*, the Egyptian escaped, as is implied in the question of the chief captain, "Art thou that," &c. — *Murderers*. *Sicarii*, in the Greek, so called from their wearing short poniards or daggers, (*sica*), with which they were accustomed to assassinate any that fell under their odium. This class of persons multiplied exceedingly in Judea during the civil tumults and wars of that period, until they constituted a species of organized banditti — the *guerilla* bands of Palestine.

39. *A Jew of Tarsus*. Chap. ix. 11, 30, xi. 25. — *No mean city*. Tarsus was the capital of Cilicia, and famous for its schools of philosophy, and the high refinement and wealth of its people. Xenophon, in his *Anabasis*, calls Tarsus "a great and flourishing city;" and Josephus says that "it was the metropolis and most renowned city among them," the Cilicians.

40. *Beckoned with the hand*. To still the noise of the people, and give him an opportunity to address them. The division of chapters, by which the twenty-first closes with a comma, breaks the sense, according to the usual habit of reading. Kenrick notices the self-command of the apostle, in addressing the people so soon after the tumult and injuries he had received, and his earnestness to seize every opportunity to preach the gospel and do good.

The lofty heroism of Paul, in pur-

## CHAPTER XXII.

*Paul addresses the Jews from the Steps of the Castle, and a Tumult arising, he is placed for Safety in the Castle.*

**M**EN, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence which I make <sup>2</sup> now unto you. (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he <sup>3</sup> saith,) I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.

suing the dangerous path of duty, ver. 4, 11-13, and his gentleness in yielding to the wishes of his brethren, when it could be done without the sacrifice of any principle, ver. 26; the warm-hearted sympathy of the Christian flock for one another, ver. 5, 6, 12, 13, 17, 20; the sensitiveness of the Jews to any thing that seemed to impair their religious observances, ver. 20, 21, 28; the readiness with which they would break a high moral law in vindication of a ceremonial one, ver. 28, 31; and the danger and evil of making inferences and suppositions without facts to support them, ver. 29, are a few of the topics which are suggested to our meditation in this chapter.

## CHAPTER XXII.

**1. Men, brethren, and fathers.** Dropping the idiom, "brethren and fathers," he addresses but two classes, his equals, or those of the same age, and his seniors, or superiors. — *My defence.* Literally, "apology," used in the sense of plea or refutation of charges. — *Now.* A word of conciliation, expressive of a tinge of deprecation, as "I pray you." It does not refer to the time of his defence, as rendered by our translators, so much as to his wish that they would hear him candidly; like our own idiom, "hear me now."

**2. Hebrew tongue.** The common

language was not pure Hebrew, at this period, but a corrupted form called Syro-Chaldaic, or Aramean. Paul's use of it was adapted to soothe the passions of his hearers, and gain a more favorable ear. He thus fulfilled the rhetorical and the Christian precept, first to conciliate the goodwill of his audience.

**3. I am verily, &c.** The same idiom of "man," as in ver. 1. The plain sense is, "I am verily a Jew," and it would thus be more forcibly rendered. In their fury against Paul, some might even forget, or not know, that he was a genuine Hebrew. — *Tarsus.* Chap. xxi. 39. — *At the feet of Gamaliel.* Some detect here a reference to the elevated seats of the Jewish teachers, and the lowly position of the scholars; but it is better understood as a figure descriptive of pupilage. Acts iv. 35, 37, v. 2. He reminds them that he was not only a Jew, but one who was educated, in the midst of Rabbinical light, by the greatest teacher of his age. For an account of Gamaliel, see chap. v. 34, note. — *The perfect manner, &c.* He was taught, in the strictest manner, the doctrines and the usages of the Pharisees, and the law of Moses. Such a one was not lightly to be accused of speaking against the law, chap. xxi. 28. — *Zealous toward God.* He had not only education, but zeal; his acquirements were en-

And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. As also the high-priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders; from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished. And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me. And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus, and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do. And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus. And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt *there*, came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him. And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. And

kindled by a burning enthusiasm, like what then glowed in their hearts. Gal. i. 14; Rom. x. 2.

4. *This way.* This sect, the Christians. Chap. vii. 58, viii. 1, 3, ix. 1, 2. He exemplified his zeal by his bloodthirsty persecution of the disciples of Jesus.

5–16. Parallel to chap. ix. 2–18.

5. *Doth bear me witness.* A form of speech expressive, not of a fact, but of a possibility. The high-priest could bear him witness. — *All the estate of the elders.* Or, all the presbytery, or eldership, or sanhedrim. As the conversion of Paul took place

about twenty years before this time, the same high-priest and elders could not, perhaps, bear witness personally, as having been in office at that time, but the facts were matter of history not to be disputed.

9. *Heard not the voice*, i. e. did not hear an articulate voice or words; but they did hear a noise, chap. ix. 7, and note. If, however, an actual discrepancy be admitted, the truth of the history is not thereby shaken in the least. Slight variation of testimony is considered as rather confirming, than weakening, the general trust-worthiness of a narrative.

now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord. — And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance; and saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem; for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me. And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned, and beat in every syna-

16. *Why tarriest thou?* He urged the immediate performance of what was felt to be a duty. The present moment is the only one we can call our own. It may be emphatically said to every mortal, "Do what thou *doest* quickly." We cannot command the future any more than the past; "Behold, now is the accepted time." — *Wash away thy sins.* As baptism was an emblem of purification, and indicated repentance and self-consecration, it was a sign that one's sins were remitted, as well as abandoned, and were, so to say, washed away. The soul was cleansed. *Heb. x. 22.* — *Calling on the name of the Lord.* Griesbach reads, according to the best authorities, "calling on his name." Grotius observes that "some commentators refer the pronoun *his* to Jesus; but I am of opinion that it more properly relates to God the Father, for demonstratives and relatives often pertain to the remote antecedent." But, if reference be made to Jesus, it by no means gives a command or sanction to the act of addressing our prayers to him as God, for it would be contrary to his own uniform example and precepts. Those who saw him in a vision, present to them, as did Stephen, chap. vii. 56, 59, might properly invoke him; but even that did not demonstrate his deity, for men put forth prayers, petitions to men, to kings, to rulers, and, in some large churches of Christendom, to saints, angels, and the Virgin Mary, without any implication like the one just stated. The

meaning of the phrase in question probably is, "to be called by the name of the Lord, or to call upon, one's self, that name." Paul was exhorted to receive baptism and the Christian name, become the avowed follower of the Messiah, and assume that odious and despised designation. *Chap. xv. 17; Rom. x. 12-14; 1 Cor. i. 2; 2 Tim. ii. 22; Heb. xi. 16; Jas. ii. 7.*

17. *Come again to Jerusalem.* *Chap. ix. 26.* After an interval of about three years, since his conversion, passed in Arabia, *Gal. i. 17, 18*, he revisited the holy city. — *Prayed in the temple.* Showing that he continued to pay respect to the temple after he embraced the gospel, and thus indirectly silencing their charge. *Chap. xxi. 28.* — *Trance.* Ecstasy, vision. There was first the preternatural, or ecstatic, state of mind, — and then a vision, or symbolical revelation, was disclosed to the mind, in that state. See Farmer on Christ's Temptation, p. 70, n.

18. *Saw him*, i. e. Jesus, mentally, spiritually. — *They will not receive thy testimony concerning me.* Paul was admonished that it would be in vain for him to bear his testimony to Jesus before the hardened Jews, for they would reject both the message and the messenger; but that a far more promising field of labor was opened in the Gentile world.

19, 20. Paul reasons the matter. There were peculiar considerations why the Jews should hear his testimony rather than that of any other

gogue them that believed on thee: and when the blood of thy <sup>20</sup> martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him. And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence <sup>21</sup> unto the Gentiles.

And they gave him audience unto this word, and *then* lifted <sup>22</sup> up their voices, and said, Away with such a *fellow* from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live. And as they cried <sup>23</sup> out, and cast off *their* clothes, and threw dust into the air, the <sup>24</sup> chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined by scourging; that he might

one; for they knew how ferocious and energetic he had been in persecuting the disciples, even from the first martyrdom; and he inferred that his testimony on the other side would carry a double weight. But he was assured that his hopes were in vain. — *In every synagogue.* So it had been predicted by Jesus. See note on Mat. x. 17. — *Martyr.* Witness.

21. *Far hence unto the Gentiles.* He had been selected, from the first, as the apostle to the Gentiles. Chap. ix. 15, 16. He was peculiarly fitted, both by nature and by education, for this sublime errand of carrying “the good news of great joy,” from place to place, throughout the heathen world. The command, or intention, is simply repeated, as needing no argument, coming from such a source as precluded error.

22, 23. *Gave him audience.* Listened to him. — *Unto this word.* Unto the word “Gentiles;” that instantly kindled, like a spark upon tinder, their previous rage, which had been suppressed for a few moments by the apostle’s speech. Col. i. 24; Eph. iv. 1, 3, show that he was, as here stated, called particularly to suffer for the sake of the Gentiles, for that “mystery,” or secret — their introduction into the kingdom of heaven. Without waiting to hear the rest of his justification, they pre-

sumed, from that word, that all the charges against him were true, and gave way to the most violent passions. We have a signal illustration here of the intense pride and bigotry of many of the Jews. Nothing was too bad to say, or do, to defend, as they supposed, their religion. Murder, falsehood, revenge, became lawful instruments to promote that object. The end, in their eyes, justified the means. Has not history, in Christian lands, presented us with too many counterparts of this old Jewish *theologicum odium*, theological hate? — *Cried out — cast off their clothes — threw dust.* All impassioned signs of popular fury, made in furtherance of the uproar. They manifested the disposition, if they had the power, to put Paul to an instant death. 2 Sam. xvi. 13. It is related, by travellers in Arabia and Persia, that similar methods of demanding justice, or some gratification of their passions, from their chiefs or princes, exist among the people, to this day; that they collect in great numbers, utter the most horrid cries, tear their garments, and cast dust into the air, until their request is granted.

24. *The castle.* Of Antonia, upon the steps of which they had been standing during Paul’s address. — *Examined by scourging.* A technical phrase of judicature, meaning to

25 know wherefore they cried so against him. And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncon-  
 26 demned? When the centurion heard *that*, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest; for this  
 27 man is a Roman. Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea. And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this free-  
 29 dom. And Paul said, But I was *free-born*. Then straightway

be tortured to exact a confession. This abomination of endeavoring to make a prisoner criminate himself by the extremity of dreadful agonies, the most unjust and insane of all modes to test innocence and detect guilt, has, in some form, polluted the pages of modern statute-books in almost every nation of Europe. The old ferocious barbarism of heathen ages still lingers too much around the prisons and gallows of Christendom. The gospel is but just beginning to reach the prisoner, and send its mild sunbeam into his cold, dark cell, and darker, colder heart. — *That he might know, &c.* Ignorant of the language of Paul, and of the cause of the tremendous excitement of the populace, and supposing that he was guilty of some enormity, the only expedient which suggested itself to his mind was the usual coarse and brutal means to extort a confession.

25. *As they bound him with thongs.* Preparatory to scourging, the soldiers usually bound the poor victim to an upright pillar, so as to confine the body, and expose the back more directly to the blows. — *To scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncon-demned.* The apostle puts the inquiry, not for information, for he well knew the law, but as a caution to those who were about to incur a dangerous responsibility. It was contrary to the Roman statutes to bind or scourge a Roman citizen, unless condemned for some crime; in which

case he ceased to be a Roman citizen, and was degraded from his privileges and immunities.

26, 27. The simplicity and minuteness of ancient narrative, and the form of dialogue common to an early and unsophisticated age, are illustrated in these verses.

28. *With a great sum, &c.* The right of Roman citizenship was at first granted only to such foreigners as had conferred distinguished services on the country, or as a mark of honor upon great and good individuals. But, in process of time, it could be purchased for money; and, under the corrupt emperors, it was prostituted so low, to fill their treasuries, that it lost its value, and never again recovered its primitive distinction. The tribune, in the present instance, had purchased the privilege with a large sum of money. — *But I was free-born.* This is generally supposed to have been on account of Tarsus being made a free city by Augustus, and its inhabitants thus being admitted to the right of citizenship. Pliny, in his Natural History, says, that “Tarsus was a free city;” Appian, that “the people of Tarsus were free, and discharged from paying tribute;” and other expressions are quoted, from Dion Cassius and Philo, bearing upon the same point.

29. *Examined, i. e. with scourging.* — *Because he had bound him, i. e. to be scourged, not because of the*

they departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.

On the morrow, because he would have known the certainty 30 wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he loosed him from *his* bands, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down, and set him before them.

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chains, chap. xxi. 33. The officer shrank with dread from the outrage he was about to commit, and the soldiers recoiled from the act in process, and, we are told, "straightway departed from him." This is perfectly in accordance with the testimony of profane history and oratory, and be-speaks a writer true to the spirit of the times. Thus Cicero, against Verres, says: "Whoever he might be whom you were hurrying to the cross, were he even unknown to you, if he but said that he was a Roman citizen, he would necessarily obtain from you, the *prætor*, by the simplest mention of Rome, if not an escape, yet at least a delay of his punishment." And, again: "It is a heinous sin to bind a Roman citizen; it is wickedness to beat him; it is next to parricide to kill him; and what shall I say, to crucify him?"

30. *Loosed him from his bands.* The chains by which he was bound to two soldiers, chap. xxi. 33, not the bonds of ver. 25, from which, of course, he would be immediately released. It does not appear that there was any violation of the right of citizenship in his being bound with chains to the soldiers that guarded him. When brought before the Jewish council he was unchained, but afterwards was confined in the same way. Chap. xxiv. 27, xxvi. 29.—*All their council.* The Sanhedrim.—*Brought Paul down*, i. e. from the castle of Anto-

nia into an apartment of the temple where the Sanhedrim held their meetings. The division of chapters here, again, is unfortunate, for ver. 30 more properly belongs to chapter xxiii.

We have arrived at another important stage in the life of Paul. Contrary to the earnest intreaties and tears of his friends, but actuated by a sense of duty, he had come to Jerusalem, in the face of multitudes of enemies, and fallen, as it was predicted he would fall, into their snares. Henceforth he is not free, for several years; he is Paul the prisoner, Paul the aged. But, though prison and bonds were his portion, yet man could throw no chains around his spirit, nor cool his love, nor damp his Christian zeal. His mind seemed to glow with intenser activity, when he could no longer journey and preach as before. Witness his speeches before the people, the Sanhedrim, Felix, and Agrippa. Witness his epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. Subjected to the slow martyrdom of deferred hope, of arbitrary power, and of imperial caprice, cut off from what he most desired, the boundless field and freedom of a missionary life, he did not pine or complain; but "learned, in whatsoever state he was, therewith to be content" and "rejoiced in the Lord greatly."

## CHAPTER XXIII.

*Paul before the Sanhedrim, whence he is carried for Safety into the Castle of Antonia, and afterwards despatched to Cesarea.*

AND Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until 2 this day. And the high-priest Ananias commanded them that

## CHAPTER XXIII.

1. *Earnestly beholding the council.*

As with the look of assured innocence, or to recognize those whom he had formerly known.—*Men and brethren.* Brethren.—*In all good conscience before God.* A declaration of sincerity and conscientiousness, not of perfectness. The apostle, in other passages, professed his obedience to conscience, even in his persecution of the church; but he was guilty, nevertheless, in not taking pains to enlighten his mind, as well as to follow the impulses of the inward monitor. Chap. xxiv. 16, xxvi. 9. Thus he speaks, in 1 Tim. i. 13, of having acted *ignorantly*, i. e. without the guidance of the intellect, though he affirms that he acted at all times conscientiously. Conscience is a *sentiment*, not an *intellectual power*. It is the capacity of feeling what is right and wrong, of connecting pleasure with one and pain with the other, and thus prompting to one, and dissuading from the other. It judges of duty according to the facts presented to it by the mental powers, and, in proportion to the correctness with which the case is thus stated, makes its decision correct. Hence the moral sense requires the aid of the intellect, in order to pronounce its decree according to truth and the will of God. Conscience is a safe guide only when conscientiously followed, not with passion, prejudice, or caprice. Even if it be felt, as in the case of Paul, to be but the echo of a higher tribunal — “conscience before God” — yet it possesses only a

more terrific and destructive energy, when the mind fails to shed the light of intelligence, and the heart the kindly warmth of humane affections. Witness the conscientious, but not therefore right or just, persecutor of every age; whether in the case of a Paul making havoc of the flock, or a Dominic founding the Inquisition, or a Calvin instigating the death of Servetus, or the Puritans imprisoning and banishing Baptists and Quakers.

2. *The high-priest Ananias.* He is believed to be the son of Nebi-dæus, and had been sent to Rome a prisoner, to answer for his conduct in office, in company with the prefect of the temple, but was acquitted, and returned to Jerusalem. At this time he was holding the priesthood, either by usurpation, in the disorders of the times, or provisionally and temporarily. There is, however, a degree of uncertainty as to the identity of Ananias, and the history of his life.—*To smite him on the mouth.* 1 Kings xxii. 24; John xviii. 22. This barbarous indignity was in accordance with both ancient and modern Oriental usages, which partake very much of a despotic spirit. The blow was given, as is conjectured, for one or all of several reasons — such as the freedom of Paul’s address and the firmness of his air before the Sanhedrim, his protestations of innocence, and his having before thrown himself upon the protection of the chief captain as a Roman citizen.

stood by him, to smite him on the mouth. Then said Paul unto 3 him, God shall smite thee, *thou whited wall*: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law? And they that stood by, said, Revilest thou 4 God's high-priest? Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that 5 he was the high-priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people. — But when Paul perceived 6

3. *God shall smite thee, thou whited wall.* The figure, in the concluding part, resembles that in Mat. xxiii. 27; Luke xi. 44. The apostle spoke, as it would seem, less from a prophetic than an indignant impulse. He boldly, and it may be passionately, denounced the act of the high-priest, and threatened him with that visitation of heaven which, it required no supernatural aid to predict, would overtake him for his bad life and tyranny. Jesus rebuked a similar indignity in a serener spirit, becoming the Son of God. John xviii. 23. If Paul infringed upon the sacred limits of love and forbearance, he instantly recovered himself, and made the only requisite apology. See note on chap. viii. 20. If Ananias be the one who held the office of high-priest under Quadratus, and who was acquitted at Rome of charges against him, he is represented as miserably perishing under the hands of assassins, *sicarii*, a few years after this time.—*Smitten contrary to the law.* The prisoner pressed home the gross inconsistency of a judge being himself the most forward to do unjustly. Various passages in the Hebrew Scriptures enjoined rectitude and mercy in judgment. Lev. xix. 15, 35; Deut. xxv. 1; John vii. 51.

5. *I wist not.* I knew not. Paul has been supposed by some to speak ironically, that he did not know that so unjust a man was in the highest and holiest office; he did not recognize any thing of the high-priest in Ananias. But others understand him as

declaring a fact, that he did not, in the changes of the times, and his absence from Jerusalem, know that he was high-priest, though it would have seemed that his position in the council, and the lead he took in its proceedings, would have sufficiently indicated that to one who had attentively scrutinized the Sanhedrim, as Paul had done. Ver. 1. Hence the more probable interpretation is, that he did not know, reflect, consider, that he was the highest officer in the nation, and in his haste "spoke unadvisedly with his lips." The gross insult and cruelty he suffered betrayed him into an undue momentary warmth. The latter clause of the verse harmonizes with this view of the subject.—*It is written.* Ex. xxii. 28. The candor of the narrative is observable here, as throughout the New Testament; for events are related without reference to their bearing upon the reputation of the apostles or disciples. The truth is told without fear. There is no trimming to suit opinions or conventional ideas, or to anticipate inferences which might be drawn. The rule is, the truth is always safe; principles, not men. But, in the end, this fearless style gains more than it loses; because, if a few are touched with a shade of skepticism at beholding the faults of Peter, Paul, and others, yet multitudes discern in this transparent frankness the signature of a pure and honest purpose, which fears God too much to fear man.

6. *When Paul perceived, &c.* See

that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead 7 I am called in question. And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the 8 multitude was divided. For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess 9 both. And there arose a great cry: and the scribes *that were* of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let

ing that his case was prejudged, and that it was in vain to look to the Sanhedrim even for a fair trial, Paul used a stroke of policy to divide his judges, among themselves, and bring to light the spirit which rankled in their own hearts. This showed an intimate knowledge of the character of his nation, though some have doubted its perfect propriety, and thought that it had more of the wisdom of the *serpent* than the innocence of the *dove*. — *I am a Pharisee, &c.* He was a Pharisee before his conversion, and, since that change, he was in the main with them in relation to the dividing question between them and the Sadducees; and defended the resurrection by new and peculiarly strong proofs of the rising of Jesus from the dead. He did not mean, or say, and they would not understand him, that he was a thorough Pharisee in all points, for then he never would have been there, arraigned as a prisoner at the bar of the Sanhedrim; but that there was one great common ground on which he took the side of the Pharisees against the Sadducees, and for which he was especially accused, viz., that of the resurrection of the dead. Chap. iv. 1–3, v. 17. — *Of the hope and resurrection.* Or, “of the hope of the resurrection,” laying aside the idiomatic form.

7. The apple of discord, which he

25 \*

had thrown into the assembly, produced its intended effect, and instantly arrayed the two sects in hostile attitude.

8. *No resurrection, &c.* Mat. xxii. 23. The leading points of difference between the Pharisees and Sadducees are here briefly given. See note on Mat. iii. 7. — *Both*, i. e. the belief in the resurrection, and in the existence of immaterial beings, as angels and spirits.

9. *A great cry.* The spirit of the times is vividly conveyed to us by the uproar of the highest civil and ecclesiastical tribunal of the Jewish nation, assembled to pass judgment on one of the most important cases that could fall under their jurisdiction. —

*Arose and strove.* Confusion spread among the parties, and, rising from their seats, they fiercely contended and quarrelled in words and gestures with one another. — *We find no evil in this man.* They saw him in quite a new and more favorable light after his declaration, and suddenly found that he was a perfectly innocent and injured man. It is sufficiently apparent how little they had against him before, except prejudices. — *If a spirit or an angel hath spoken, &c.* Referring, doubtless, to his account of his conversion. Chap. xxii. 6–11, 18. They now intimated their credence of what they had before received with execrations, because they

us not fight against God. And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring him into the castle.

And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be 11 of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome. — And when it 12 was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying, that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. And they were more than forty 13 which had made this conspiracy. And they came to the chief 14 priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul.

perceived it might be turned to their own account, as believers in spiritual beings. — *Let us not fight against God.* All one word in Greek, which is cancelled from the text by Griesbach and others, as destitute of authority; and the sentence is left in that unfinished state in which it naturally would be amidst such a scene of tumult. Chap. v. 39.

10. *Lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces.* The violence of the parties was such, that the officer feared Paul would actually fall the victim of personal injuries, and he therefore rescued him from danger with a military force.

11. *The Lord.* Jesus. — *Also at Rome.* As he had proclaimed the gospel in the metropolis of the Jewish, so he was to do the same in the metropolis of the Gentile, world. Surrounded as the apostle was with dangers on every side, it was a worthy occasion for the interposition and friendly counsel of the great Head of the church. If the Christian cause was of sufficient moment to receive unusual aid at its introduction, it also merited the same through that earlier period when it was beat upon by all the storms of persecution, and

all the powers of earth seemed to be combined for its utter extinction. The whispers of encouragement and warning from a higher world were needed to nerve the heart of the suffering, endangered apostle.

12, 13. *Bound themselves under a curse.* i. e. they made a vow, and invoked the malediction of Heaven, if they did not fulfil it. It has been conjectured, by Michaelis and others, that this band of desperate men belonged to the class called *sicarii*, see chap. xxi. 38, who were also *zealots* for the law, and ready to engage in the grossest wickedness, to gratify personal or religious animosities. —

*Neither eat nor drink.* 1 Sam. xiv. 24. A common form of vow, according to Jewish scholars; it might signify that they would abstain from their ordinary food until they had effected their purpose, rather than that they would literally take no nourishment whatever. But, if strictly bound to observe their oath to the letter, they could yet obtain an easy absolution from the rabbins, or by some other expedient. Josephus relates that ten men made a similar vow to take the life of Herod the Great, because he had de-

15 Now therefore ye with the council signify to the chief captain, that he bring him down unto you to-morrow, as though ye would inquire something more perfectly concerning him: and we, or  
16 ever he come near, are ready to kill him. — And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into  
17 the castle, and told Paul. Then Paul called one of the centurions unto *him*, and said, Bring this young man unto the chief  
18 captain; for he hath a certain thing to tell him. So he took  
him, and brought *him* to the chief captain, and said, Paul the  
prisoner called me unto *him*, and prayed me to bring this young  
19 man unto thee, who hath something to say unto thee. Then the  
chief captain took him by the hand, and went *with him* aside  
privately, and asked *him*, What is that thou hast to tell me?  
20 And he said, The Jews have agreed to desire thee, that thou  
wouldest bring down Paul to-morrow into the council, as though  
21 they would inquire somewhat of him more perfectly. But do  
not thou yield unto them: for there lie in wait for him of them  
more than forty men, which have bound themselves with an oath,  
that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him:  
22 and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee. So  
the chief captain *then* let the young man depart, and charged  
*him*, See thou tell no man that thou hast showed these things to  
23 me. — And he called unto *him* two centurions, saying, Make  
ready two hundred soldiers to go to Cesarea, and horsemen  
threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour

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parted from the customs of their nation.

15. *Council. Sanhedrim.* — *Or ever he come near*, i. e., in modern phrase, “before he comes near.” The plan was to waylay Paul between the castle and the council-chamber, and assassinate him.

22, 23. *Tell no man.* The success of the chief captain’s measures depended upon secrecy, and he did not wish to bring upon himself the odium of the Jews for rescuing Paul from their machinations. — *Soldiers. Infantry.* — *Spearmen.* The original is doubtful, but probably means light troops, armed with spears or jav-

lins, and constituting a species of body-guard. — *At the third hour of the night.* Or, nine o’clock in the evening. The same reason which dictated an escort of four hundred and seventy men, to guard Paul out of Jerusalem and some distance on the way to Cesarea, also selected the night-time to march; though, in the tropical regions, night-travelling is common on account of the oppressive heat of the sun by day. The formidable and desperate character of the apostle’s enemies demanded strong and well-laid measures to defeat their plan.

of the night ; and provide *them* beasts, that they may set Paul 24 on, and bring *him* safe unto Felix the governor. And he wrote 25 a letter after this manner : Claudio Lysias, unto the most ex- 26 cellent governor Felix, *sendeth* greeting. This man was taken 27 of the Jews, and should have been killed of them : then came I with an army, and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman. And when I would have known the cause wherefore 28 they accused him, I brought him forth into their council : whom 29 I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death, or of bonds. And 30 when it was told me how that the Jews laid wait for the man, I sent straightway to thee, and gave commandment to his accusers also, to say before thee what *they had* against him. Farewell.

Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and 31

24. *Beasts, that they may set Paul on*, i. e. relays, or animals for riding, to succeed one another at different stages in the journey of between sixty and seventy miles.—*Felix, the governor.* Or, procurator, whose residence was at Cesarea. Antonius Felix was a freedman of Claudio Cesar, the Roman emperor, and brother of Pallas, the favorite of Nero. According to the testimony of Tacitus, he governed his people with a servile mind, and indulged in every species of cruelty and lust ; and he says that he expected to escape with impunity in the commission of his wicked deeds, on account of his great power. He had, at this time, been procurator about five years, and remained in office two years longer, chap. xxiv. 27, when he was succeeded by Porcius Festus.

26. *Claudius Lysias.* The name of the chief captain. — *The most excellent.* A mere title, as we use *excellency*. — *Greeting.* Or, wisheth good health and prosperity.

27. *Should have been.* Better, “would have been.” — *With an army.* Rather, “with a band,” or detachment of troops. — *Rescued him.* This he had done twice in reality,

chap. xxi. 32, xxiii. 10, though he probably refers only to the former case. — *Having understood that he was a Roman.* He wished to give the impression that he had done the act out of regard to Roman honor, though, in fact, he did not know that the apostle was a free citizen until after the rescue. Had he told the simple truth, it would have been more to his praise, because to rescue a *man* from danger and injustice was more honorable than to rescue a *Roman* merely because he belonged to that nation.

29, 30. *Questions of their law.* Lysias naturally resolved all discussions, among the Jews, respecting religion, into disputes in relation to their law. This letter appears to be an exact transcript of the original, which Luke might have procured from Paul ; for the latter, in his long residence in Cesarea, chap. xxiv. 27, could easily obtain a copy. The chief captain presents himself, throughout the narrative of this and the last chapter, as a wise, firm, and, for a heathen, well-principled man.

31. *Antipatris.* A city built by Herod, and called, in honor of his father, Antipater. It lay upon the route

32 brought *him* by night to Antipatris. On the morrow they left  
 33 the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle: who,  
 when they came to Cesarea, and delivered the epistle to the  
 34 governor, presented Paul also before him. And when the gov-  
 ernor had read *the letter*, he asked of what province he was.  
 35 And when he understood that *he was* of Cilicia; I will hear  
 thee, said he, when thine accusers are also come. And he  
 commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment-hall.

### CHAPTER XXIV.

*Paul's Defence before Felix, and Discourse before Felix and Drusilla*

AND after five days, Ananias the high-priest descended with  
 the elders, and *with* a certain orator *named* Tertullus, who in-  
 2 formed the governor against Paul. And when he was called  
 forth, Tertullus began to accuse *him*, saying, Seeing that by  
 thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are

from Jerusalem to Cesarea, about twenty miles from the latter, in a large fertile plain. Its location was identified by Robinson, in his late researches in Palestine and Arabia. The distance was great, for one night's travel; but the Roman soldiers were distinguished for their hardihood, the march was a forced one, and the "night" might be used to include a considerable part of the following day.

32. *They left the horsemen.* As Paul was out of danger from his enemies' waylaying him, the four hundred foot-soldiers returned to Jerusalem, and the seventy horsemen formed his escort the remainder of the way to Cesarea.

35. *Herod's judgment-hall.* Or, pretorium. This was a palace, built by Herod the Great, for the royal residence, and occupied by the successive procurators. Paul was confined in the same edifice.

"In the first part of this chapter, we behold the high-priest, in the sacred office of a judge, animated with religious zeal, grossly violating the

duties of his station. In the latter part, we find the common people, from the same cause, deviating still further from the rules of justice and propriety. And could it be religion which thus divested men of humanity, and inspired them with the fury of the beasts which roam the desert? In framing this wicked project, true religion had no share. Their zeal was not the offspring of benevolence, but issued from the gloomy region of hatred and malice."

### CHAPTER XXIV.

1. *After five days.* From the time of his arrest. Chap. xxi. 33. — *De-*  
*scended.* From Jerusalem to Cesarea; the usual language, in going  
 from the holy city in any direction Chap. xv. 1. — *Orator named Tertul-*  
*lus*, i. e. an advocate or pleader in the courts, and probably, as his name indicates, a Roman, and one, therefore, peculiarly fitted to argue before a Roman judge. The preparations were such as showed the importance attached to the trial.

2, 3. *Called forth.* From custody.

done unto this nation by thy providence, we accept *it* always, 3 and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness. Not 4 notwithstanding, that I be not further tedious unto thee, I pray thee, that thou wouldest hear us of thy clemency a few words. For 5 we have found this man *a pestilent fellow*, and a mover of sedi-  
tion among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader 6 of the sect of the Nazarenes: who also hath gone about to pro-  
fane the temple: whom we took, and would have judged accord-  
ing to our law: but the chief captain Lysias came *upon us*, and 7 with great violence took *him* away out of our hands, commanding 8 his accusers to come unto thee: by examining of whom, thyself

— *We enjoy great quietness.* Or, public tranquillity. — *Very worthy deeds are done, &c.* To gain a favorable ear, he flatters the procurator with the good deeds he had done, and the unusual peace under his government. It was true, Felix had repressed many disorders in Judea, by settling difficulties between the people of Cesarea and Syria, clearing the country of robbers, and destroying two seditious leaders, Eleazer and the Egyptian. Chap. xxi. 38. But both his public and private character was stained with vice and crime. He was avaricious, licentious, and cruel, and ill deserved the praises of Tertullus. He was hated by the people over whom he ruled; and, when he returned to Rome, he was pursued by the complaints of his subjects. — *Thy providence.* Or, foresight, prudence. — *We accept it always.* We cheerfully acknowledge and applaud the blessings we enjoy under your administration, at all times and places. — *Most noble.* The title of office. Luke i. 3.

5. *A pestilent fellow.* Literally, and more forcibly, “a pestilence,” a pest. The commentators quote from Martial, the Roman satirist, in illustration of the text, “Thou art not *vicious*, O Zoilus, but *vice*,” its essence and substance. — *A mover of sedition, &c.* All the disturbances

produced by the enemies of Paul were of course laid to his charge. No crime was more heinous, in the eyes of Rome, than sedition; for the vast compass of their power made them jealous of every attempt, even in the remotest province or city, to throw off the yoke of subjection. — *A ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.* The Christians were so called out of opprobrium, by their enemies, because their Master was from the despised town of Nazareth; and the same title is given them to this day by Jews and Muhammedans. The labors and abilities of Paul are appreciated by his enemies, as placing him in the first rank of his sect.

6. *Gone about to profane the temple.* Or, attempted, or plotted, to do this sacrilege. Chap. xxi. 28. The sum of the accusations was, that the prisoner was a pest, full of sedition and blasphemy, and the chief leader of the hateful sect of the Nazarenes. The ingenious and perverse construction thus put upon the life and public services of Paul, by Tertullus, argued one who knew well how to make “the worse appear the better reason.” — *Would have judged, &c.* The barefaced falsehood of this declaration is evident from chap. xxi. 31, xxiii. 10, 15.

7, 8. *With great violence.* Or, “with a great force,” referring to the

mayest take knowledge of all these things whereof we accuse 9 him. And the Jews also assented, saying, That these things 10 were so. — Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more 11 cheerfully answer for myself: because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to 12 Jerusalem for to worship. And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, 13 neither in the synagogues, nor in the city: neither can they 14 prove the things whereof they now accuse me. But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so

military seizure of Paul, which Tertullus would represent as an arbitrary and tyrannical act. We have, probably, only the heads of this speech, a summary of the argument, but it was artfully adapted to its purpose. The orator conciliated the favor of Felix by praising his administration, charged the prisoner with the gravest political and religious offences — sedition, heresy, ver. 5, and profanation of the temple, ver. 6 — professed that the Jews were about to punish him according to their law, but were prevented by the unwarrantable interference of Lysias, and concluded by putting in the testimony of witnesses present from Jerusalem, who corroborated all his statements.

10. *Thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation*, i. e. a ruler, whose office comprehended not only the judicial, but the civil and military, functions. Felix had been procurator of Judea about five years, during which time he had necessarily become conversant with Jewish affairs. The apostle opened his defence with a conciliatory remark, based not, like the adulation of his opponent, upon specious pretences, but upon an important and favorable circumstance — that he was permitted to argue before one so well qual-

ified, by long experience in his office, to make a right decision.

11. It has been observed, that Paul proceeded to clear himself of the three leading accusations fastened upon him by his adversary, viz., sedition, ver. 11 — 13, heresy, ver. 14 — 16, and profanation of the temple, ver. 17 — 21. — *Because that thou mayest understand.* More simply and literally, “thou mayest know,” or, “it being in thy power to know,” or learn by evidence. The present rendering connects ver. 11 too strongly to ver. 10. — *Twelve days.* About seven days, chap. xxi. 27, were occupied with the vow, and five with his arrest, confinement, and journey to Cesarea. Ver. 1. The short time he had been in Jerusalem precluded any opportunity to excite the people to sedition, at least in the holy city, whatever he might do elsewhere. — *To worship.* His object was not sedition or sacrilege.

12, 13. He utterly disclaimed any act or attempt that could be construed as a crime against the public peace, whether in the city, temple, synagogues, or any where among the people, and boldly affirmed the impossibility of the charge being sustained by evidence.

14. *Heresy.* This is the same word in Greek as that translated *sect* in ver.

worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: and have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void

5, and simply means "division or schism;" but without any reference to the present popular notion of heresy, as being an error of doctrine. The Pharisees were called a sect of the Jews. Chap. xxvi. 5. Paul thought the gospel true; his enemies did not; but, in either case, he belonged to a *sect*, a division from the rest of the Jews, a new party, which was all that was intended to be conveyed in the text. The odium of belonging to a new sect or party in religion gradually associated it in the minds of men as involving error in belief; and hence the origin of the modern term, *heresy*, from the original Greek, used here and in ver. 5. Thus, all new sects of Christians have been heretics, seceders, schismatics, and holding, in the judgment of opponents, an erroneous faith. Thus, Luther and Calvin were rank heretics, in the eyes of Rome; the Puritans and Methodists, in the eyes of the English church; and the Unitarians, in the judgment of the Trinitarians and Calvinists. Thus, every new offshoot is a sect, a heresy, from the old stock. Thus does God, notwithstanding human opprobrium and persecution, from age to age refine and re-refine his church, that at last it may be without spot or blemish.—*So worship I the god of my fathers.* Or, "so serve I," &c. The Jews enjoyed religious toleration under the Roman government. Paul claimed protection under the same broad shield as the rest of his nation. He said, it was true he belonged to a despised party, but he, nevertheless, worshipped the God of his fathers, the same God as the rest of the Jews,

and believed as firmly as they did in the law and the prophets. He therefore claimed the same toleration as his opponents under the imperial sway of Rome. Religious divisions among themselves were not to be allowed as a reason for losing that great common privilege.—*Believing all things, &c.* Paul grounded his belief in a Messiah partly upon the argument from the Hebrew Scriptures. An intelligent belief in the gospel must necessarily include a conviction of the divine origin and authority of that earlier dispensation, of which it is the fruit and fulfilment.

15. He describes also another common ground between himself and a large portion of the Jewish people, viz., the belief in the resurrection from the dead. Chap. xxiii. 6; Dan. xii. 2. This was an additional reason why he should still enjoy the same privileges as the rest of his countrymen.

16. *I exercise myself.* It is the leading aim and endeavor of my life.—*A conscience void of offence toward God and toward men.* This declaration was a part of his argument, not an expression of vanity, or a mere declaration of personal experience. So far from being a seditious citizen, or an impious blasphemer, he made it the single, paramount end of his life, and his constant effort, to maintain an unspotted conscience in all his relations and duties both towards God and towards men. The phrase, *void of offence*, means, literally, "not stumbling," not falling into sin, pure. This earnest expression of rectitude, uttered with all the sincerity of truth,

17 of offence toward God, and *toward* men. Now, after many  
 18 years, I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings. Where-  
 upon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple,  
 19 neither with multitude, nor with tumult: who ought to have been  
 20 here before thee, and object, if they had aught against me. Or  
 else let these same *here* say, if they have found any evil-doing in  
 21 me, while I stood before the council, except it be for this one  
 voice, that I cried, standing among them, Touching the resur-  
 rection of the dead I am called in question by you this day. —  
 22 And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowl-  
 edge of *that* way, he deferred them, and said, When Lysias the  
 chief captain shall come down, I will know the uttermost of your

while it was in itself a beautiful fea-  
 ture of the apostle's defence, was  
 calculated to weigh not a little in  
 his favor before his judge, who after-  
 wards showed that he was not insen-  
 sible to moral considerations. Ver.  
 25. The great poet would almost  
 seem to have had this passage in his  
 mind, when he wrote,

“What stronger breastplate than a heart un-  
 tinted?  
 Thrice is he armed, that hath his quarrel just;  
 And he but naked, though locked up in steel,  
 Whose conscience with injustice is corrupted.”

17, 18. Paul proceeded to explain the circumstances of his arrest, and throw off the malicious charge of profaning the temple. — *After many years.* It was more than twenty years since the conversion of Paul; and though he had paid an occasional visit to Jerusalem, he had not resided there for any length of time during that period. — *I came to bring alms, &c.* Chap. xxi. 26. The apostle was the bearer of contributions from the Christian churches in Macedonia and Achaia “to the poor saints” in the holy city. 2 Cor. viii. 1—5, ix. 1—5. Instead of coming to Jerusalem for purposes of rebellion and impiety, he brought, as an act at once of kindness to his nation and of piety to God, relief to the poor and suffering, as was before done in

a famine. Chap. xi. 28—30. — *Jews from Asia*, i. e. the region about Ephesus. Chap. xxi. 27—29. — *Found me purified, &c.* They found me performing the vow of purification in peace and order.

19—21. The Asian Jews, the original agents in exciting these difficulties, were not present, as they should have been, to testify to the transactions in the temple. In their absence, the accused fearlessly calls upon the witnesses before him to testify to any offence he had committed before the Sanhedrim, unless it were to allege the resurrection to be the matter for which he was brought to trial. This may be supposed to be uttered in irony, as fitted to overwhelm his enemies with mortification and shame for the uproar into which their council was thrown by the simple announcement of that subject, and the danger of personal violence to the prisoner. Chap. xxiii. 6, 10.

22. *Having more perfect knowledge of that way.* This clause is not quite clear. It may be understood that Felix, by the investigation and speech of Paul, *had* obtained a more accurate knowledge of the Christian doctrine and sect; or he put off the cause that he *might* obtain a better knowledge of it; or the sentence is mis-

matter. And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to <sup>23</sup> let *him* have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister, or come unto him.

And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, <sup>24</sup> which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And as he reasoned of righteousness, tem- <sup>25</sup> perance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I

placed, as some critics suppose, and the whole would more properly read, "He deferred them, and said, When I shall have a more correct understanding of this way, or faith, and Lysias shall come down, I will give the parties a hearing." — *The chief captain shall come, &c.* As he had been a principal agent in some of the transactions, it was important his testimony should be put into the case before an ultimate decision.

23. The lenity with which the prisoner was treated, and the privileges allowed him, showed plainly that he was not regarded by the procurator as a very heinous offender. But he detained him, from other considerations, as appears from ver. 26, 27.

24. *Drusilla.* She was the daughter of Herod Agrippa, whose death is recorded in chap. xii. 19–23, and therefore the granddaughter of Herod the Great. The following narrative of Josephus shows the criminality of her connexion with Felix. Agrippa, the son of Herod Agrippa, "gave his sister, Drusilla, in marriage to Aziz, king of the Emesenes, when he had consented to be circumcised. For Epiphanes, the son of king Antiochus, had broken the contract with her, by refusing to embrace the Jewish customs, although he had promised her father he would. But this marriage of Drusilla with Aziz was dissolved, in a short time, after this manner. When Felix was procurator of Judea, having had a sight of her,

he became passionately enamored of her; and indeed she was the most beautiful of her sex. He therefore sent to her Simon, a Jew of Cyprus, who was one of his friends, and pretended to magic, by whom he persuaded her to leave her husband, and marry him, promising to make her perfectly happy, if she did not disdain him. It was far from being a sufficient reason; but, to avoid the envy of her sister, Bernice, who was continually doing her ill offices because of her beauty, she was induced to transgress the laws of her country, and marry Felix." — *The faith in Christ.* The Christian faith, or religion. Drusilla, being a Jewess, might have felt an interest in learning Paul's doctrine respecting the Messiah.

25. *Reasoned.* Or, discoursed. — *Righteousness.* Justice, rectitude, a virtue of which Felix had shown himself sadly deficient. It is observable that Paul did not go into a speculative, or even argumentative, discourse upon the gospel, but seized with a skilful hand upon the great practical points, such as would not only convey to his distinguished auditors a knowledge of the plan and spirit of Christianity, but would bear with pungent force, though with Christian courtesy, upon their hearts and consciences. Nor did the circumstance that he was dependent, as a prisoner, upon Felix, for pardon and life, make him waver a moment in discharging his duty as a preacher of

26 will call for thee. - He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent 27 for him the ostener, and communed with him. — But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.

righteousness, and rebuker of wickedness, though in high places. His lofty moral courage, and the fidelity with which he dealt with the characters of his hearers, showed how far he was elevated above every selfish consideration in his office. — *Temperance.* Or, continence, chastity; or, in general, the government of the animal passions and appetites. — *Judgment to come.* The doctrine of a future righteous retribution, in which every man would receive according to the deeds done in the body, whether good or bad. These topics were all such as were adapted to produce compunctions of conscience in the guilty pair, for they had been grossly unjust and sensual, and had acted with but little reference to moral obligation, and the decisions of the Infinite Judge. — *Felix trembled.* The words of the fearless preacher were not without their effect. Conscience, though seared, felt the reproof, and Felix, clothed as he was in pomp and royalty, trembled on his throne. — *Go thy way for this time: when I have a convenient season, &c.* But, though he heard the call of duty and repentance, he yielded to the habit of procrastination, and dismissed the apostle to his lonely cell. The fatal words passed his lips, and no "convenient season" ever returned again to bring the sinner back from his wanderings. He heard Paul again and again, ver. 26, but that peculiar emotion, that unusual tenderness, was no more felt. The opportunity had passed forever. So solemn, so eagerly to be sought, and so faithfully to be used, is the season of an awakened conscience.

Yet, how many bid it depart for *this time*, and promise themselves a *convenient season*, which never comes! "Behold, *now* is the day of salvation."

26. *Hoped also that money, &c.* The times were full of fraud and corruption, and Felix was venal and avaricious. He showed how much more powerful is the confirmed habit of one's life than the appeal of truth, though urged with all the eloquence of an apostle, and responded to by one's own moral nature. He is the same Felix as before, or even more hardened, and adds new acts of tyranny. Perhaps he thought Paul would devote the funds, raised in distant churches for the relief of the poor in Judea, to the purchase of his own freedom; but he did not know the man. He might suppose, also, that the prisoner's friends, who had been so liberal on other occasions, would at this time show a like generosity. He did not understand that they would shrink from bribery as a crime. — *Sent for him the ostener, &c.* The subject of these interviews has no record; but Felix might intimate the base proposal of opening his prison with a golden key. Two years the captive pined in the tyrant's hands, and heard and resisted the whispers of the tempter, if such an opportunity to obtain his freedom could be any temptation to the incorruptible apostle. Olshausen suggests that God granted him this quiet period for spiritual recruiting and invigoration within his own nature, as he did other seasons for action and usefulness.

27. *Porcius Festus.* He was the

## CHAPTER XXV.

*Paul defends himself against the Jews before Festus, and is afterwards brought before Agrippa and Bernice.*

NOW when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Cesarea to Jerusalem. Then the high-priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him, and desired favor against him, that he would send him for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him. But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Cesarea, and that he himself would depart shortly thither. Let them therefore,

twelfth procurator of Judea, A. D. 58-62, and died in that country.—*Came into Felix' room.* Was his successor in office.—*Felix, willing to show the Jews a pleasure.* To gratify them, to ingratiate himself with them. This, likewise, was in precise accordance with his character, as depicted by Tacitus, Suetonius, and Josephus. But, like most crimes, it failed of its purpose. The Jews preferred complaints, at the imperial court, of the maladministration of Felix, and he was sent as a prisoner to Rome, and only escaped punishment by the intercessions of his brother, Pallas, with Nero. This favorite of the emperor, though partially in disgrace himself, was able to screen his brother from his just deserts. Among his numerous other acts of wickedness, during his term of office, Felix procured the assassination of Jonathan, the high-priest, through the aid of the *scarii*, because he reproved him too faithfully for the abuses of his administration. The final history of this bad ruler is not recorded; but it is said, though doubtfully, that Drusilla, with her son by Felix, perished in a tremendous eruption of Mount Vesuvius.

The simplicity of the Christian religion, as presented in all the addresses of Paul, and even when he was called especially to discourse “concerning the faith in Christ,”

ver. 24, the sin of resisting good impressions, the danger of delay, ver. 25, and the contrast between the character of the apostle and that of his powerful, but corrupt, hearers, furnish topics for interesting reflections.

## CHAPTER XXV.

1. *The province, i. e. of Judea.—He ascended.* The usual term for going to the capital of a nation; and more proper in this connexion, as Cesarea was on the seaboard, and Jerusalem inland.

2, 3. *Informed.* Or, “brought an accusation.” Their malice had slumbered two years, but not died; and, upon the accession of a new procurator to the government, the Jews hoped they might secure a decision in their favor.—*Laying wait in the way, &c.* This was the revival of the nefarious plan of chap. xxiii. 15, which seemed new to be under the direct patronage of the first men in Jerusalem.

4. *That Paul should be kept, &c.* Better, with Bloomfield, “that Paul was in confinement at Cesarea;” for, as he was imprisoned there, it was proper his trial should be in that place.

5. *Which among you are able.* Either the persons of weight and standing, or those who could conveniently attend the trial.—*If there be*

said he, which among you are able, go down with *me*, and 6 accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him. — And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Cesarea; and the next day sitting on the judgment-7 seat, commanded Paul to be brought. And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they 8 could not prove; while he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against 9 Cesar have I offended any thing at all. But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me? 10 Then said Paul, I stand at Cesar's judgment-seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very 11 well knowest. For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me

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*any wickedness in him.* Literally, according to the best reading, “if there be any thing in this man.”

6. *More than ten days.* Griesbach reads, “not more than eight or ten days,” which better corresponds with ver. 4, that he should depart *shortly* to Cesarea.

7, 8. *Many and grievous complaints, &c.* A repetition, probably, of the charge before Felix, chap. xxiv. 5, 6. — *The law of the Jews, — the temple, — Cesar.* These were the principal heads of accusation before, viz., that he was guilty of sedition, of profaning the temple, and of being the ringleader of the Nazarenes.

9. *Willing to do the Jews a pleasure.* Like Pontius Pilate, who condemned Jesus to be crucified to gratify the Jews; and like Felix, who left Paul bound two years for the same object, Festus was willing to purchase popularity at the price of injustice. — *Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem?* He could only have asked this question at the instigation of the Jews, who thus hoped for an oppor-

tunity to make way with Paul, while upon the journey.

10, 11. *I stand at Cesar's judgment-seat,* i. e. the tribunal of Festus was, in authority and name, the bar of the Romau emperor, — who went under the generic designation of Cesar, from Julius Cesar, the first of the dynasty. The apostle had committed no crime cognizable by the Jews, could hope for no justice from them, and was unwilling to hazard his life by returning into the midst of his bitter enemies. — *As thou very well knowest.* There is a comparative degree in the original, as if to say, “You know it better than I can tell you;” or, “than you seem to wish to know it.” The examination before Festus was sufficient to show him the innocence of the accused. — *If I be an offender, &c.* The apostle magnanimously declared that, if he merited death, he was willing to suffer the penalty of the law; but, being an innocent and injured man, he would not consent to go to Jerusalem, which he seemed to consider

unto them. I appeal unto Cesar. Then Festus, when he had 12 conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Cesar ? unto Cesar shalt thou go.

And after certain days, king Agrippa and Bernice came unto 13 Cesarea, to salute Festus. And when they had been there many 14 days, Festus declared Paul's cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix: about whom, when I 15 was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, desiring to have judgment against him. To whom 16 I answered, It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have license to answer for himself concerning

as equivalent to being delivered up to the Jews,—since they would undoubtedly find means, by force or fraud, to get him into their hands.—*I appeal unto Cesar.* This was a privilege which a Roman citizen enjoyed, in case of any wrong or injustice, real or supposed, to appeal from the provincial judiciary to the people of Rome for redress; or, after the empire succeeded to the republic, to the emperor. The apostle despaired of justice in Judea, and chose to have even such a tyrant as Nero, who then sat upon the throne, as his judge, than be any longer at the mercy of corrupt and ambitious rulers.

12. *When he had conferred with the council.* Lardner has conclusively shown, that this council was a Roman, and not a Jewish, one, and consisted of the chief officers of the province. Thus, Petronius is cited as consulting with "his assessors what was proper to be done;" and Gallus, as conferring "with his captains."—*Hast thou appealed unto Cesar?* This is more properly pointed without an interrogation, as an affirmation,—which is done by Luther, Tyndale, Markland, Wakefield, Thomson, Sacy, and others,— "Thou hast appealed unto Cesar; and unto Cesar shalt thou go."

13. *King Agrippa.* Called Agrippa the Younger,—the son of Herod Agrippa, who died at Cesarea, chap. xii. 23; and the grandson of Herod the Great. He was 17 years old at his father's decease; and, through the favor of Claudius Cesar, was appointed king of Chalcis, and afterwards promoted to a wider dominion, which was still further increased under Nero. At this period, therefore, he was enjoying the power and title of a king; and came to Cesarea on a visit of congratulation to Festus upon his accession to the government of Judea.—*Bernice.* Or, as sometimes written, Berenice. A sister of Agrippa, and also of Drusilla. Chap. xxiv. 24. She was first married to her uncle Herod, king of Chalcis; and, after his death, to Polemon, king of Pontus and part of Cilicia. But she deserted him, and lived with her brother Agrippa, as was supposed, in a criminal manner; and afterwards became the mistress of Titus. She was distinguished for her beauty and sensuality.

14. *Declared Paul's cause unto the king.* As Agrippa was well versed in Jewish matters.—*Left in bonds.* Literally, "a prisoner." Chap. xxiv. 27.

15, 16. We here learn the nature of the Jews' application to Festus.

17 the crime laid against him. Therefore, when they were come hither, without any delay on the morrow I sat on the judgment-seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth; against whom, when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation 19 of such things as I supposed: but had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, 20 whom Paul affirmed to be alive. And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked *him* whether he would go to 21 Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters. But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Cesar. 22 Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. To-morrow, said he, thou shalt hear him.

23 And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice,

Ver. 2, 3.—*It is not the manner of the Romans, &c.* The Romans were superior to most nations of that period in their jurisprudence; and many of their laws have descended to modern times, and been incorporated into existing systems. The statement of the text is substantiated by other authors:—thus Appian says, “It is not their custom to condemn men before they are heard.” Philo says of the Roman prefects, “They yielded themselves to be the common judges, hearing equally the accusers and defendants, condemning no man unheard, prejudging no man, but judging without favor or enmity, according to the nature of the case.” Tacitus also remarks, that “a defendant is not to be prohibited from adducing all things, by which his innocence may be established.” The justice of such laws is happily exemplified in our own judicature.

18, 19. *None accusation, &c.* He ascertained, what was unexpected to him, that the prisoner was charged with no flagrant violation of law, but with certain offences rather of a religious, than a civil or political, nature.—*Of their own superstition.* Better, “of their own religion;” for

Festus was conversing with a Jew, and he would, as a matter of common courtesy, speak respectfully of the law. It is the same word as that used in an adjective form, in chap. xvii. 22. See note thereupon.—*Of one Jesus, &c.* In so contemptuous a light, to the Roman ruler, appeared at that time the glorious doctrine of the resurrection, which has since gone abroad to give life and hope to men, while he and his nation, in all their boasted pomp and power, are only known from their connexion with that same “Jesus which was dead,” and his apostle “Paul.” Truly, “God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty.”

20, 21. *I doubted of such manner of questions.* The margin reads, “I was doubtful how to inquire hereof.”—*To be reserved.* Or, kept.—*The hearing of Augustus.*—Or, the trial, or examination, before the emperor, who was so called after Augustus, the successor of Julius Cesar.

23. *With great pomp.* With the pageantry and splendor of royalty.—*Chief captains.* “Chiliarchs,” or tribunes, commanders of a thousand men. See note on chap. xxi. 31.

with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth. And Festus said, King <sup>24</sup> Agrippa, and all men which are here present with us, ye see this man about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both at Jerusalem, and *also* here, crying that he ought not to live any longer. But when I found that he had committed <sup>25</sup> nothing worthy of death, and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him. Of whom I have no <sup>26</sup> certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and specially before thee, O king Agrippa, that, after examination had, I might have somewhat to write. For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not <sup>27</sup> withal to signify the crimes *laid* against him.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

*Paul's Defence before Agrippa.*

THEN Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself: I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall <sup>2</sup> answer for myself this day before thee, touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews: especially, *because I know* <sup>3</sup>

25. *Hath appealed.* Grammatical uniformity in the tenses requires "had appealed."

26. *No certain thing.* Festus thus condemned himself out of his own mouth; for if there were no charges against the accused, sufficiently clear even to furnish matter for a statement to the emperor, how much less was there any thing worthy of his detention. — *My lord*, i. e. Cesar. — *I might have somewhat to write.* The object was to gain, by an examination before Agrippa, — who was conversant with Jewish questions, — such a knowledge of the real merits of the case as would be proper to lay before the imperial court. The division of the chapter at this place is likewise unfortunate, as in previous instances, and breaks

in upon the scene in which Paul appeared before Festus, Agrippa, and Bernice, and made his defence.

There appear to have been two reasons why Paul appealed to Rome. 1. That he might escape from the plots of his countrymen, and enjoy a fairer trial. 2. That he might visit the metropolis of the world, and there preach the gospel.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

1. *Stretched forth the hand.* A gesture of earnestness elsewhere spoken of in ancient writings.

2, 3. *Before thee.* To conciliate the attention and candor of Agrippa, the apostle employs no compliments or flatteries, as such, but states a fact at once honorable to the king, and auspicious to his own cause. — *To*

thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently. — 4 My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among 5 mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews, which knew me from the beginning, (if they would testify,) that after the 6 most straitest sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee. And now I stand, and am judged for the hope of the promise made of 7 God unto our fathers: unto which *promise* our twelve tribes, instantly serving *God* day and night, hope to come. For which 8 hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should 9 raise the dead? — I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

*be expert, &c.* Chap. xxiv. 10. It was true that Agrippa was brought up by his father, Herod, as a Jew, educated in the law and the usages of their religion and nation, and afterwards thrown into such public affairs as would mature his mind in all such matters. He is supposed to have been 33 years old at this time, and his sister Bernice one year younger.

5. *The most straitest.* Grammatical accuracy requires "the straitest." — *I lived a Pharisee.* Phil. iii. 4–6. The sect of Pharisees was exceedingly scrupulous in the observance, not only of the Mosaic ritual, but of all traditional customs, though often destitute of practical goodness. Mat. v. 20, xxiii. 23.

6, 7. *The hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers,* i. e. the hope founded on the promise. Some understand this to mean the hope of the resurrection from the dead; but it is more natural to refer it to the Jewish hope of a Messiah. God had promised to the patriarchs, that in their seed all the nations of the earth should be thus blessed. — *Twelve tribes,* i. e. the Jewish nation under their ancient title. — *Instantly serving God day and night.* By which

is meant their constant and earnest service. — *Hope to come.* Or, "to attain." Even to this day, that sublime old hope is struggling deeply in all Jewish hearts throughout the world. The disappointment of two thousand years has not quenched it. It is one of the most remarkable sentiments that has ever actuated large masses of mankind; and it appears to owe its original strength, judging simply from its duration, to a higher than mortal source. — *For which hope's sake.* Paul was suffering in behalf of the fulfilment of this expectation, in endeavoring to convince the Jews that their Messiah had already come.

8. *Why should it be thought, &c.* The resurrection was the crowning proof of the Messiahship; and the apostle remonstrated with his hearers for thinking it incredible that that proof could be given, or had been given. It was limiting the power of God, and making human experience the test of the ways of Omnipotence.

9. *That I ought, &c.* To give smoothness and courtesy to his argument and appeal to his hearers, he stated his own backwardness to believe, and showed that he finally

Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints 10 did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against *them*. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, 11 and compelled *them* to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted *them* even unto strange cities. — Whereupon, as I went to Damascus, with authority and com- 12 mission from the chief priests, at mid-day, O king, I saw in the 13 way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me, and them which journeyed with me. And 14 when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? *It is* hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am 15 Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy 16 feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and *from* the Gentiles, 17

adopted the Christian faith on no slight or insufficient grounds. On the subject of his conscientiousness, in his unbelief and persecution of the church, see note on chap. xxiii. 1. Sincerity is not the test of truth, though it is of honesty.

10. *Saints*, i. e. Christians. — *When they were put to death, &c.* Stephen, and probably others, suffered martyrdom in that early persecution, of which Paul appeared as the presiding genius and actor. Chap. vii. 58, viii. 1-3, ix. 1.

11. *Compelled them to blaspheme*. Or, urged, or constrained, them to blaspheme or revile their Lord. An illustration of this passage may be found in Pliny's letter to the emperor Trajan, respecting the Christians, in which he says that some of those who were arraigned, "reviled Christ," "uttered invectives against him." The Jewish persecutors seem to have extorted from their victims the same

evidences of their rejection of the Messiah. — *Exceedingly mad*. He frankly confessed that he was hurried away by his ungovernable passions, and was beside himself with anger. — *Strange cities*. Only one is specified, — Damascus, — but perhaps there were others, not recorded.

12-16. See chap. ix. 2-6, and notes. This is the third account of Paul's conversion; and some interesting particulars are added, — as, that the voice was in the Hebrew tongue; and also a more full description of the office to which he was called, was given in ver. 16-18.

16. *Witness*. Paul was a witness of what he had seen, and of what had been revealed to him, as well as the Twelve. Chap. i. 22.

17. *Delivering*. The preferable rendering is, "selecting, or choosing." — *From the people*. The Jews. Chap. ix. 15.

13 unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. —  
 19 Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the 20 heavenly vision: but showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do 21 works meet for repentance. For these causes the Jews caught 22 me in the temple, and went about to kill *me*. Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which 23 the prophets and Moses did say should come; that Christ should suffer, *and* that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gen-

18. Here is a concise description of the object of the gospel, given in the highly figurative and poetical style of the East. — *The power of Satan*, i. e. the kingdom of evil, of which Satan is represented as the head or ruler. See Col. i. 12–14, for an illustration, in different language, of the same ideas contained in this verse. All must confess that the object of Christ's coming—which was elevated heaven-high above all others—was to save men from sin, from darkness and error; to give them light, life, forgiveness, and a bright and beautiful inheritance among the blest; in one word, to make them better and wiser, and to lead them up to happiness, heaven, God; and that the great instrument was faith in him, as is stated at the end of the verse. Why need it ever be asked, “What is Christianity?” when the answer is written in so many places, in the New Testament, in such luminous words.

20. The order was to speak first to the Jews, then to the Gentiles; and the sequence of duty,—first, to repent of the past, seek help from God, and then lead a renewed life.

— *Do works meet for repentance*, i. e. live in accordance with their change of motives and feelings from bad to good, and act in a manner becoming their new profession.

21. *For these causes, &c.* The hostility of the Jews was provoked by his success as an apostle, and his preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, and opening to them the privileges and promises of the Messiah's kingdom. — *Went about*, i. e. sought, or tried.

22, 23. *To small and great*, i. e. all classes, the lowly and lofty. He argued with great confidence before Agrippa as a Jew, from the Jewish Scriptures, that the Messiah was to be a sufferer; that he was to rise from the dead; and that he was to be the moral guide, not only of the children of Israel, but also of the Gentiles. Luke xxiv. 26, 27, 44–46.

— *That Christ should suffer*. It was always a great stumbling-block to the Jews, that Jesus should suffer upon the cross. Their ideal of the Messiah was a triumphant hero. In affirming, therefore, as Paul did, that it was the prediction of their own Scriptures that he should suffer, die,

ties. — And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with 21 a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad. But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; 25 but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. For the king 26 knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely. For I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him;

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and rise again, he argued directly to their state of mind, and gave proof that Jesus' was the Christ. — *The first that should rise.* He was the first to rise, and not die again.

24. Festus conceived the wonderful story, ver. 12 - 15, or the earnest zeal of Paul, to evince derangement of mind; or, perhaps, he intimated it not as an established fact, but warned him of a dangerous tendency. — *Much learning.* He laid, with seeming forbearance and courtesy, his aberrations to the charge of his studious habits and devotion to theology. It was an ancient opinion, that great absorption in study produced mental alienation. Posterity has long since decided which was most truly the madman, — Paul, yielding to the will of God, and preaching the gospel at the hazard and loss of his life, — or the Roman governor, elevated in power and station, but enslaved to the capricious pleasure of the people, courting the favor of the great and powerful, and wronging a helpless prisoner for the sake of popularity. Chap. xxv. 9. It is an easy reply to make to the earnest preacher of the gospel, and to the zealous reformer of corrupt institutions and sinful practices, that they are fanatics, enthusiasts, madmen. But, in the sight of God, they are truly the most sane and sensible men, who elevate moral and religious interests to the highest place in human regard; who cling to truth as a reality, the most important reality in nature; and who would rather

die, if occasion called for it, than yield the controversy against ignorance, sin, and wretchedness.

25. *Most noble.* When reviled, he reviled not again; but used the same respectful address as before. — *The words of truth and soberness.* So far from being insane, he boldly affirmed that he uttered the very words of truth and sanity. He was at the antipodes of madness. His doctrines were the essence of wisdom, the soul of truth.

26. *For the king knoweth.* With admirable skill he parried the slighting charge of the cold-hearted Roman, who would naturally look on these subjects with an unsympathizing mind, by appealing directly to the Jewish king, whose education had better prepared him to appreciate Paul's reasoning. He challenged the experience and observation of one who had enjoyed the opportunity of an enlarged acquaintance with Jewish affairs, to bear witness to its truth. — *This thing was not done in a corner.* The conversion of Paul was a matter of public notoriety. He had been distinguished as a persecutor, and his change of faith would be well known to those with whom he had been associated, and to the people at large. Christianity was, in all respects, open to the inspection of the world: its whole course; the life and history of its Founder and disciples; its doctrines, institutions, and privileges, — were not hidden, but proclaimed upon the house-tops. John xviii. 20.

27 for this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, be-  
28 lievest thou the prophets ? I know that thou believest. Then  
Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a  
29 Christian. And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou,  
but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and alto-  
gether such as I am, except these bonds.

30 And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the  
31 governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them : and when  
they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying,

*27. Believest thou the prophets ?* He knew that Agrippa had been educated as a Jew ; and he confidently put the question to him respecting the prophets,—whose works furnished a leading argument for the Messiahship of Jesus. But, with a stroke of nature and truth, he instantly added, “I know that thou believest ;” thus precluding a negative answer,—if one was ready to be given,—and favorably impressing, and forestalling the good opinion of Agrippa, by the frankness and confidence of his appeal to his Jewish feelings. History contains few more masterly and effective efforts of eloquence, than this address of Paul before Agrippa ; and even Longinus, a heathen, enrols, in his Treatise on Sublimity, the name of the apostle in the catalogue of celebrated Grecian orators.

*28. Almost.* Literally, “in a little,” or in a short time, or soon. A question has been raised, whether Agrippa was serious or not in this declaration. He was probably as much so as such a man could be on such a subject. He was a worldly, haughty, and sensual man,—though better than many of his name and family,—and what he said was rather meant as a compliment to Paul for his zeal and eloquence, than as a literal announcement of his own sober convictions. He spoke not in irony, but in politeness.

*29. Such as I am, except these bonds.* Never was a happier turn given to the current of remark. With refined courtesy, and at the same moment with a pure and expansive Christian love, the apostle lifted up his fettered hands, and expressed the beautiful wish of the text. True religion is not envious, or exclusive ; it only asks that all may taste of the purest joys known to itself. How sublime this burst of an earnest and strong-souled nature, forgetting all distinctions between the parties — robes and chains — liberty and bondage — wealth and poverty — the royal throne and the criminal’s bar — and leaping with one bound to the grand conclusion ! Every enmity, and wrong, and fear, is swallowed up in that deep love ; and the only prayer is, that all might taste of the same celestial blessedness ; but then one dark shade crossed his mind of his own woes, and he simply and kindly said, “except these bonds.” Such was the worthy and the exquisite close of this masterpiece of Christian eloquence and appeal, which bears so many intrinsic proofs that it was the product of the same mind as the glowing, affectionate epistles. Rom. x. 1.

*30, 31. The king rose up, &c.* The power of the appeal was perhaps too tenderly felt by Agrippa, for him to allow himself to remain any longer exposed to its subduing influence ;

This man doeth nothing worthy of death, or of bonds. Then <sup>32</sup> said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Cesar.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

*The Voyage and Shipwreck of Paul.*

AND when it was determined, that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto *one* named Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band. And entering into a <sup>2</sup> ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia, *one* Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being

and he first rose to dismiss the assembly. — *This man doeth, &c.* The result of their private consultation was, that Paul was exempt from any criminal charge. He had convinced them of his innocence.

32. Agrippa was so assured of the injustice of the accusation brought against the prisoner, that he hesitated not to say, Jew though he was, that Paul might have been set at liberty had he not appealed to the Roman emperor; for, in that way, the jurisdiction of Festus over him had ceased, as well for an acquittal and release as for a condemnation. There could be no retraction. Paul had appealed only in an extremity, by constraint, chap. xxviii. 19, when there was a prospect he might be remanded to Jerusalem, and subjected to the plots of his old, implacable enemies.

The address of Paul, its arguments, its spirit, its sincerity, its courage, its truth, its calm zeal, furnish circumstantial evidence of no slight strength for the truth of that religion in whose behalf he spoke and suffered. We ask, with confidence, knowing there can be but one answer, Could imposture, could enthusiasm, could any thing, short of a true faith and a holy religion, have produced such a speech as this of the apostle before Agrippa? Then may a fountain send forth, at the

same place, sweet water and bitter; and the fig-tree bear olive-berries, and a vine, figs.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

1. *That we should sail.* The use of the first person plural indicates the presence of the writer with Paul in his voyage and shipwreck. The apostle had appealed to the emperor, and must therefore be carried to Rome, in Italy, where he resided. — *Certain other prisoners.* It is shown, by the commentators, that it was customary to send prisoners from the provinces to Rome, for trial. — *Augustus' band.* Or, cohort, one pertaining to the emperor. Suetonius and Lipsius are cited to corroborate this fact. Some of the Roman legions bore the same honorary title. A legion included several cohorts.

2. *Adramyttium.* A port in Asia Minor, lying upon the Ægean Sea, and belonging to Mysia, or Æolia. There is still a town in that region, called *Adramyt.* — *Launched.* Or, set sail. — *To sail by the coasts of Asia,* i. e. Asia Minor. It was a coasting vessel, trafficking from port to port. — *Aristarchus.* See chap. xix. 29, xx. 4. He was afterwards, though not, probably, at this time, a fellow-prisoner with Paul. Col. iv. 10. After an imprisonment of more than two years, chap. xxiv. 27, the apostle

3 with us. And the next *day* we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave *him* liberty to go unto his 4 friends to refresh himself. And when we had launched from thence, we sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were contrary. And when we had sailed over the sea of Cilicia and 6 Pamphylia, we came to Myra, *a city of Lycia*. — And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy; and 7 he put us therein. And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarce were come over against Cnidus, the wind not suffer-

left Judea, in bonds, and did not again return. He was accompanied by at least two friends, Luke and Aristarchus, and doubtless more, who would sustain and encourage one another.

3. *Sidon*. See chap. xii. 20. — *Entreated*. For “treated.” — *His friends*. The gospel had been preached in Phœnicia long before. Chap. xi. 19. The kindness shown to Paul was no doubt attributable to the favorable opinion of Festus and Agrippa, respecting his innocence.

4. *We sailed under Cyprus*. Chap. iv. 36. This phrase is doubtful, but means, as is most likely, that they sailed along the southern coast of the island, and thus sheltered themselves from the unfavorable winds. It is the opinion of others that they sailed on the north side of Cyprus. The ancient navigators, ignorant of the mariner’s compass, and many other means and resources now enjoyed, were accustomed to creep as much as possible along the shores, in sight of land; whereas, with all the wonderful improvements of modern times, the open sea is considered the least exposed to danger.

5. *The sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia*, i. e. the part of the Mediterranean which washed those provinces of Asia Minor on the north, and Cyprus on the south and south-east. — *Myra*. This was the capital of Lycia, situated upon the sea-coast. —

*Lycia* was a maritime district of Asia Minor, bounded on the north by Pamphylia, and on the east, west, and south, by the sea.

6. *A ship of Alexandria*. The immense population of Rome were supplied with grain, in a great measure, from Egypt. The fertility of the Nile rendered that country the granary of the empire. This vessel was engaged in the transportation of bread-stuffs, as we learn from ver. 38, and had touched (as was usual for vessels coasting from point to point, in order to learn their destination and to trade) at the harbor of Myra, which was a mart of consequence in those days. This ship must have been one of some size, for that period, as, besides the cargo, it contained two hundred and seventy-six persons. Ver. 37.

7. *Cnidus*. This was a city, situated on a rocky and mountainous peninsula of the same name in the province of Caria, between the island of Rhodes and Coos, or Cos. It was distinguished for the worship of Venus, and contained the celebrated statue of that goddess by Praxiteles.

— *Crete*. Now called Candia; an island fronting the *Ægean* Sea, one hundred and seventy miles long, and about thirty or forty broad, distinguished for its salubrity, fertility, and beauty. — *Salmone*. A promontory, at the east end of the island, which they doubled, and sailed under Crete,

ing us, we sailed under Crete, over against Salmone: and 8 hardly passing it, came unto a place which is called, The Fair Havens; nigh whereunto was the city of Lasea. Now, when 9 much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished them, and said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will 10 be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives. Nevertheless, the centurion believed the 11 master and the owner of the ship more than those things which were spoken by Paul. And because the haven was not commo- 12 dious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, and there to winter; which is a haven of Crete, and lieth toward the south-west and north-west. And when the south wind blew softly, suppos- 13 ing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing thence, they

or south of it, to escape the contrary winds.

8. *Hardly passing it.* With difficulty they doubled the eastern cape or promontory, Salmone, and next came to a roadstead, or species of harbor, as it would appear, where they remained a short time.—*Lasea.* No record of this place is found in ancient authors. The nearest approach to it is *Lasos*. It would appear to be an inland town, of which the Fair Havens was the port.

9, 10. *Much time was spent.* They had not advanced so rapidly in their voyage, on account of detention by winds, as they wished, and navigation had become hazardous.—*The fast was now already past.* This was the Jewish fast of expiation, which occurred about the last of September, near the time of the severe equinoctial storms. Lev. xvi. 29, 31, xxiii. 27; Num. xxix. 7. All the connexion the fast had with the subject was, that it identified the season of the year. Sailors, in those parts, are said still to dread what are called “the Michaelmas flows”—severe gales at that period of the year.

—*With hurt.* Or, injury. Their lives were spared, but the ship and cargo were lost.

11. *The master.* Who had charge of the navigation of the vessel.—*The owner.* Or, supercargo, who had the care of the lading or freight. The centurion naturally paid more deference to the opinion of these men than to that of Paul, though he was experienced in voyages, and had been subjected to great perils and hardships. 2 Cor. xi. 25, 26.

12. *The haven.* Mentioned in ver. 8.—*Phenice.* Or, more properly, *Phenix*, a port on the south side of Crete, about fifty or sixty miles from the Fair Havens, and now called *Sphacia*.—*Lieth toward the south-west and north-west*, i. e. the harbor had two horns, or openings, into the main sea, one towards the south-west, or *Lybia*, as the Greek word indicates, the other towards the north-west.

13. *Their purpose*, i. e. to reach Phenix to winter.—*Sailed close by Crete.* Several translators, Luther, Tyndale, and Sacy, render “loosed unto, or from, Assos,” (making, with-

14 sailed close by Crete. But not long after there arose against it 15 a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon. And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let *her* 16 drive. And running under a certain island which is called 17 Clauda, we had much work to come by the boat: which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, strake sail, and

out warrant, one of the words in the original the name of a place,) "and sailed by Crete;" but the better idea is, that, after loosing from the Fair Havens, they coasted along the island of Crete close in shore, agreeably to the custom of ancient navigators.

14. *Against it.* Either, against the island, or the ship, it is not agreed which.—*A tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon.* This was a wind, which veered to different points of the compass, from north-east to south-east; and is probably the one known at the present day under the name of *Levanter*—the country at the eastern extremity of the Mediterranean Sea being called the *Levant*. The word *tempestuous* is literally *typhonic*, like a whirlwind, not blowing steadily from the same quarter. See ver. 27. The English word *Typhon*, and the Italian *Tuffone*, are still in use, signifying a hurricane. The proper name, *Euroclydon*, is derived from two words, meaning *east wind* and *wave*, and may be rendered "the wave-stirring east wind."

15. *The ship was caught.* By the violence of the wind, and became unmanageable.—*Could not bear up into the wind.* Literally, "could not look the wind in the eye, or face," or meet it directly. It has been observed, that "the position of greatest safety for a ship, in a storm of moderate violence, is for it to lie nearly head to the gale, presenting, so to speak, its *shoulder* to the winds and waves. By a peculiar action of the wind upon a sail placed in a partic-

ular position, the ship is retained in this posture by the very force of the storm which it is resisting. When, however, the fury of the tempest passes beyond a certain point, this position of comparative safety must be abandoned. The mariner then allows the ship to be carried round by the wind, and she flies before the tempest, entirely at its mercy. The language here used seems exactly adapted to describe these effects."—*We let her drive.* Or, in the original, "giving over, we were driven," i. e. yielding up the ship to the wind, we drifted along, or were driven.

16. *Running under*, i. e. sailing as nearly as possible to the island, to be sheltered in some measure from the wind. — *Clauda.* Otherwise termed *Gaudos*; a small island, lying south-west of Crete, and now called, according to Shaw, *Gozzo*. — *Had much work to come by the boat.* The boat was probably alongside the ship, or towed astern; and, when they wished to secure it on board the vessel, they found great difficulty in doing it, such was the violence of the wind and sea.

17. *Taken up*, i. e. into the ship, to prevent its being staved.—*They used 'helps, undergirding the ship.* Understood, by Bloomfield, to mean, that "they had recourse to props and stays, undergirding the ship with them;" binding the inner framework of the ship with pieces of strong *planking*. But it is preferable to regard the latter clause as explanatory of the former. What *helps* were

so were driven. And we being exceedingly tossed with a tem- 18  
pest, the next day they lightened the ship; and the third day <sup>19</sup> we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship. And 20 when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away. — But after long abstinence, Paul stood forth in 21 the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this

used is described in their *undergirding* the vessel. This process consisted in passing cables or chains around the whole body of the ship, and drawing them tightly together, thus preventing the timbers from separating, or bilging, in the concussion of the sea. This was more necessary, in ancient times, when the art of ship-building was less perfect; but modern instances have occurred. Thus Walters, in his account of Lord Anson's voyage round the world, speaking of a Spanish man-of-war in a storm, says, "They were obliged to throw overboard all their upper-deck guns, and to take six turns of the cable round the ship, to prevent her opening." — *Fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands.* Or, in Greek, "the syrtis." Some suppose that any shoals or sand-banks are here meant, while others contend that there is special reference to the *Syrtis Major*, or greater quicksand, lying on the northern coast of Africa, west of Cyrene, a place of great danger, and towards which a north-easter would directly drive them, from the Island of Clauda. The distance, however, was very great. The *Syrtis Minor*, or less quicksand, was farther west, on the coast of Africa, near Carthage. These were wide, shallow gulfs, filled with movable sands, impossible to be ascertained with any accuracy, because constantly in fluctuation by the winds and waves, and fatal to the vessel stranded upon them, so that *Josephus* says,

they were "dreadful even to those who heard them spoken of." — *Strake sail.* Or, better, "lowered the mast," to give the wind less power over the vessel, for the sails had probably been furled before. Ver. 15. Ancient ships had usually but one mast, which played at the base in a socket, and could be raised or let down at pleasure.

18, 19. *They lightened the ship.* By casting overboard the freight, or lading, or a part of it. — *Cast out with our own hands the tackling, &c.* It would seem that the passengers and prisoners assisted in throwing into the sea the rigging, or apparatus of the vessel, as cables, anchors, sails, &c., and the term "tackling" may also include the baggage of those on board.

20. *Neither sun nor stars.* As mariners, at that period, had no compass, "navigation's soul," they could only tell their direction by the heavenly bodies; and when, as in the present instance, the sky was overclouded for many days, they lost all idea of their whereabouts, and drifted hither and thither, in this distressed and hopeless condition, at the entire mercy of the elements.

21. *After long abstinence.* Being occupied with the care of the vessel, and disinclined to eat, on account of their fear. It is improbable that they totally abstained, during this long period. — *Gained this harm and loss.* This has been explained, "to incur all this harm and loss;" or, by

22 harm and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer; for there shall be no loss of *any man's* life among you, but of 23 the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, 24 whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cesar: and lo, God hath given thee all 25 them that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for 26 I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. Howbeit, 27 we must be cast upon a certain island. — But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some 28 country; and sounded, and found *it* twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found *it* 29 fifteen fathoms. Then fearing lest they should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the 30 day. And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under color as

Bloomfield, that they should not have loosed from Crete, for in that case they would have been gainers by, or as much as, all this harm and loss, i. e. they would have been gainers by having what they had now lost.

24. Out of regard to Paul, the rest were preserved. This law is elsewhere illustrated in the Scriptures. Gen. xviii.; Jon. i. Every righteous man is a bulwark to his city and country; while every wicked man is so much loss and danger to the community in which he lives. The providence of six thousand years has illustrated this doctrine, and left its examples in every clime and age.

27. *The fourteenth night*, i. e. since the storm began. Ver. 14. — *In Adria*, i. e. the Adriatic Sea, which then included, according to Strabo, Ptolemy, and other geographers, not only what is called the Adriatic Gulf, or the Gulf of Venice, but that portion of the Mediterranean lying between Greece, Africa, Sicily, and Italy, and sometimes called the Ionian Sea. This is evident, from the situation of Melita, or Malta, chap.

xxviii. 1, which lies south of Sicily. — *The shipmen*. The sailors. — *Drew near to some country*. There are various signs addressed to eye, and ear, and smell, by which experienced mariners, even in the night, could discover their approach to land.

28. *Sounded*. Or, “heaving the lead;” throwing into the sea a line with lead upon the end of it, by which to ascertain the depth of the water. — *Twenty fathoms*. Or, one hundred and twenty feet, a fathom being six feet. This denomination is taken from the space measured by the arms, when extended to their full length laterally.

29. *Fearing*. Because the diminished depth showed a rapid approach to land. — *Cast four anchors out of the stern*. The modern custom is to cast anchors from the bows, or fore-part of the vessel, not from the stern, or hind-part; though it is said that Egyptian sailors still observe the ancient usage of the text.

30. *The shipmen*. Sailors; those who managed the vessel. — *Under color*. Or, pretence. They were

though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship, Paul 31 said to the centurion, and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved. Then the soldiers cut off the 32 ropes of the boat, and let her fall off. And while the day was 33 coming on, Paul besought *them* all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried, and continued fasting, having taken nothing. Wherefore I pray you to take 34 *some* meat; for this is for your health: for there shall not a hair fall from the head of any of you. And when he had thus 35 spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all; and when he had broken *it*, he began to eat. Then 36 were they all of good cheer, and they also took *some* meat. And 37 we were in all in the ship two hundred three-score and sixteen

about to make use of their control of the ship, and management of its apparatus, to escape from the doomed vessel, and, by this cowardly act, save their own lives, while they left the rest to perish without aid.—*Fore-ship.* Or, *forecastle*.—*Except these abide, &c.* Though the promise of safety had gone forth, yet its fulfilment depended on the contingency of human means and efforts. An important lesson is here taught of the necessity of man's co-operation in bringing to pass the divine will respecting his welfare.

32. The soldiers interfered, and, by cutting the boat adrift, they took away the means of escape from the sailors.

33–36. *Having taken nothing.* Or, comparatively, nothing; for they could not have survived fourteen days, if they had literally eaten nothing.—*Meat*, i. e. food, whether vegetable or animal.—*For your health.* Or, for your safety; because they would be much less able to bear the hardships and dangers of shipwreck, unless they were refreshed with food.—*Not a hair fall from the head, &c.* No injury should befall one of them. 1 Kings i. 52; Mat. x. 30; Luke xxi. 18.—*Gave thanks to God.* His

spiritual mind could discern matter for gratitude, even in that dark and dreadful hour; though he was a prisoner, poor, endangered, apparently just ready to be swallowed up in the deep, or, if saved, saved to endure the tender mercies of men more cruel than the elements, yet, from the deck of that tempest-tost vessel, there mingled with the howling winds and waves a voice of thankfulness and praise. Such was the faith of Paul; such is the faith of the gospel.—*All of good cheer.* So inspiring was the courage of the apostle, that it reanimated their spirits, and summoned into action their powers, and prepared them to take those measures with vigor and hope by which their safety could be secured. How many companies of men have perished helplessly on land and on sea, because there was no God-trusting, heaven-strong soul, that could inspire self-possession, courage, and hope!

37. *Two hundred three-score and sixteen souls.* If two hundred and seventy-six seem to be a large number for a merchant vessel, we may call to mind that the ships engaged in the grain trade, from Egypt to Italy, were of very large dimensions, and that Josephus, in his *Life*, relates

38 souls. And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the 39 ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea. And when it was day, they knew not the land: but they discovered a certain creek with a shore, into the which they were minded, if it were 40 possible, to thrust in the ship. And when they had taken up the anchors, they committed *themselves* unto the sea, and loosed the rudder-bands, and hoised up the mainsail to the wind, and made 41 toward shore. And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmovable, but the hinder part was broken with the 42 violence of the waves. — And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape.

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his being shipwrecked in the Adriatic Sea, with six hundred men on board.

38. *Cast out the wheat.* Or, grain, which probably constituted a great portion of the freight of the vessel.

39. *They knew not the land.* They did not recognize where they were. They had been driven so long hither and thither, in the tempest, that they had lost all notion of where they were. — *A certain creek with a shore.* They saw a bay, or inlet, making up from the sea into the land, and concluded to run the vessel ashore. The people of Malta still call a bay on the north-east coast of their island the “Port of St. Paul,” and profess to identify the spot where the ship was stranded.

40. *Taken up the anchors.* Or, as the margin reads, “cut the anchors, they left them in the sea.” These were the anchors which they had cast in. Ver. 29. — *Committed themselves unto the sea.* Or, better, “they let go the anchors into the sea,” wishing to lighten the vessel as much as possible before it struck, ver. 38, and having no further use for them. — *Loosed the rudder-bands.* Or, the bands or cords of the rudders, for ancient ships often had more than one helm. While at anchor, these were fastened; but, wish-

ing to steer the ship to the land, they then loosed them, so that they might command the direction of the vessel.

— *Hoised up the mainsail, &c.* It is doubtful what sail is meant in the original, though it is probable that it was not the mainsail; but the purpose is sufficiently evident, which was, to drive the vessel ashore with as much impetus and as far as possible. Many of the nautical terms used in this chapter are difficult to be understood, on account of the difference between ancient and modern ship-building and navigation, though the particularity, and, so to speak, technicality, with which the various parts of the vessel, and the operations of the sailors, are detailed, show an attentive and trustworthy eye-witness.

41. *Into a place where two seas met.* They ran upon a sand-bank, which projected out into the sea, and around which there would necessarily be conflicting eddies. — *The forepart.* The bows, or forecastle. The head of the vessel was plunged into the sand, and held fast, while the stern was exposed to the violence of the waves, and broken to pieces.

42. *To kill the prisoners, &c.* The strictness of the Roman discipline was such, that soldiers were held re-

But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from *their* purpose, and commanded that they which could swim, should cast *themselves* first *into the sea*, and get to land: and the rest, <sup>44</sup> some on boards, and some on *broken pieces* of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land.

### CHAPTER XXVIII.

*The Voyage of Paul from Melita; his Arrival at Rome; Discourse before the Jews, and Imprisonment of Two Years.*

AND when they were escaped, then they knew that the island

sponsible for the escape of those under their keeping, and were visited with an equal punishment as that to which the prisoners themselves were exposed. See chap. xii. 19, and note. The military guard, in this case, therefore, were driven to the cruel alternative they proposed by the despotic severity under which they served — a proposal the more horrible, after the mutual preservation which all had enjoyed from the imminent peril of their lives. But the prisoners escaped the savage elements only to be exposed to the plots of more savage men.

43. *Willing to save Paul.* Stronger, “wishing,” desiring, to save the apostle. He had become much interested in him during the voyage, and respected him highly, for he saw that he was far more than an ordinary man. — *Which could swim.* By sending those ashore first, there were means left for the rest to escape, by floating to land on parts of the shattered vessel, and its apparatus and lading. Ps. cvii. 23–31.

44. *They escaped all safe.* Thus was the prediction of ver. 24, 34, fulfilled, and the word of the apostle confirmed. It is apparent, here, and throughout the chapter, that the incidents are minutely related, because they all have moral bearings illustrating the superior wisdom of the man of God, ver. 10, his protection by

heaven, ver. 24, his self-possession and courage in the most appalling dangers, ver. 22, 25, his devout thankfulness, ver. 35, the respect he inspired in the stern Roman centurion, and the exact fulfilment of the prophecy which he had made respecting their escape, ver. 43, 44. In the midst of that crowded ship, the blackness of the tempest, and the horrors of shipwreck, there is ever one figure which arrests and confines our attention — the serene and holy countenance of the heaven-trusting Paul.

### CHAPTER XXVIII.

1. *Melita.* Or, Malta, as now called. Chap. xxvii. 26. Several writers have attempted to identify this island with Melita, or, in its modern name, Maleda, or Malada, an isle in the Adriatic Gulf, or Gulf of Venice, near the ancient Illyricum. But that would have been far out of the track of a voyage from Cesarea to Rome, and an Alexandrian ship (ver. 11) would not have been likely to winter at a port so far removed from the usual route. Besides, their subsequently touching at Syracuse and Rhegium shows clearly that they came from Malta, south of Sicily. The island is about sixty miles in circumference, and about the same number of miles distant from Sicily. It consists of a vast rock, covered with a shallow but very fertile soil,

2 was called Melita. And the barbarous people showed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold. — 3 And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid *them* on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on 4 his hand. And when the barbarians saw the *venomous* beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet 5 vengeance suffereth not to live. And he shook off the beast into 6 the fire, and felt no harm. Howbeit, they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had

and containing as dense a population as any country in Europe, in proportion to its size. The order of Knights of St. John of Jerusalem, or the Hospitallers, was established here after being driven from Rhodes by the Turks. The island is now under the jurisdiction of Great Britain.

2. *Barbarous*. This epithet is applied, not as descriptive of their character, but as distinguishing them from Greeks and Romans, who were accustomed to call all other nations, or those who did not use their language, *barbarians*. The kindness showed to the shipwrecked strangers proved how little entitled these people were to be thus styled, at least in a moral point of view. Malta was originally settled by a colony from Carthage which spoke the Phœnician language. — *The present rain, &c.* The storm still continued, and was attended by cold, as is usual, even in warm climates, in the winter or rainy season.

3. *A bundle of sticks*. We witness the apostle disdaining no labor, and shrinking from no hardship, but contributing his utmost to aid and cheer others. — *A viper*. This small but venomous reptile was concealed among the fuel, benumbed by the cold; but, as soon as it felt the warmth of the fire, it regained its activity, and struck at the hand of

Paul. — *Out of the heat*. Or, as rendered by Tyndale, “Be cause off the heet.” Because of the heat; — the reptile was driven out of his lurking-place by the fire. — *Fastened on his hand*. Doubtless, bit him.

4. *Beast*. A literal translation would be “little beast,” though it would be preferable to render it “animal.” — Yet *vengeance suffereth not to live*. Or, *Diké*, or *Nemesis*, the heathen goddess of vindictive justice, who was believed to avenge the cause of the injured, and punish the guilty — the idea of a retributive Providence, darkly shadowed forth in the pagan mythology. The rude and superstitious people of Malta were quick to interpret every event as some special sign, and to leap to the conclusion that Paul must be a very great criminal, because he had been bitten by a serpent, and, though he had escaped the devouring sea, justice was in full pursuit, and had, at last, overtaken him. This habit of mind is restricted to no one class or period. There is much of the disposition rebuked by our Lord in Luke xiii. 1 — 5, still among men, and they are too prone to look for special judgments, especially upon their enemies.

5. 6. *Felt no harm*. The most direct and natural inference from the narrative is, that the apostle was

looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god. — In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously. And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever, and of a bloody-flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him. So when this was done, others also which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed: who also honored us with many honors; and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary.

bitten by the reptile, and was miraculously cured, though there is no positive declaration to that effect, and interpreters are divided. Mark xvi. 18. — *Swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly.* The common symptoms were a violent inflammation and swelling, and sometimes the patient dropped down dead without warning. — *Said that he was a god.* Chap. xiv. 11 — 19. This was but the same superstition under a new form; running first to one extreme, then to the other; now shuddering at the apostle as a murderer, and now revering him as a divinity. Milman justly remarks, that, “in the barbarous Melita, as in the barbarous Lystra, the belief in gods under the human form had not yet given place to the incredulous spirit of the age.”

7. *In the same quarters, &c.* Or, region. There resided the chief man, or Roman governor, Publius. — *Chief.* It has been observed that the original word, thus translated, has been found in an ancient monumental inscription upon this island, applied in the same way as in the text, furnishing a curious and undesignated coincidence. The Roman officers, Claudius Lysias, Felix, Festus, Julius, Publius, and the captain of the pretorian guard, (ver. 16,) were, in general, courteous and

kind, though they did not always render justice to their illustrious prisoner. The stern military discipline under which they had been trained would make them observant of common proprieties, and rigid in ordinary rules, however prone they might be to rapine and violence when they plunged into war.

8. *A bloody-flux.* In the Greek, “dysentery.” — *Healed him.* Though Luke, a physician, was there, the disorder required a more potent influence than his to be expelled from the patient; and, with the usual devout signs and imploring of the blessing of Heaven, that greater power descended at the instance of Paul.

9, 10. *So when this was done, &c.* This was the signal to new applications and to new cures. Though the inhabitants had erroneously supposed the apostle to be a god in human disguise, yet they found, by joyful experience, that he was the bearer of a more than mortal skill, and vindicated his alliance with higher powers in the most benevolent deeds. — *With many honors.* Or, honorary gifts. The kindness which the people manifested at first was not alienated during their long stay, but showered upon them, at their departure, new and abundant gifts.

11 And after three months we departed in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was Castor and Pollux. And landing at Syracuse, we tarried *there* three days. 13 And from thence we fetched a compass, and came to Rhegium: and after one day the south wind blew, and we came the next 14 day to Puteoli: where we found brethren, and were desired to tarry with them seven days: and so we went toward Rome.

11. *Three months*, i. e. after the winter was over. — *A ship of Alexandria*. Probably one engaged in the like Egyptian grain trade as the lost vessel. — *Whose sign was Castor and Pollux*. Or, in the original, “*Dioscuri*,” the youths of Jupiter. They were fabled, in the ancient mythology, to be the twin sons of that god by Leda, and were the patrons of sailors. After they were translated to heaven, they formed the constellation of *Gemini*, or Twins, one of the twelve signs of the Zodiac. It appears to have been customary, among the ancients, to have images painted or carved at the prow and stern of their vessels. That at the fore-part gave its name to the ship, and that at the hind-part was the tutelary divinity under whose protection it sailed, though both were sometimes the same. The “sign” here spoken of was a species of figure-head, representing the twin deities as the guardians of the vessel.

12. *Syracuse*. The capital of Sicily, situated on the eastern coast of the island; the birthplace of the famous mathematician and philosopher, Archimedes, and celebrated for its wealth, splendor, and arts. Its modern name is *Siracusa*, and it has a population of about twenty thousand.

13. *Fetched a compass*. Or, “coasted round,” being obliged to double some headland on their course to Italy; or, to gain the port of Rhegium by *tacking*, on account of unfavorable winds; which last seems the

more probable from the fact that, after they arrived at Rhegium, a favorable wind sprang up from the south — implying that they had not been favored with good winds before.

— *Rhegium*. The name of a town and promontory, situated on the Italian coast, in Calabria, across the straits from Sicily. Its present name is *Rheggio*. The place was nearly ruined by a great earthquake in the last century. — *Puteoli*. Now called *Puzzuoli*. A town on what is now the Bay of Naples, south of Rome. It was celebrated in ancient times, in conjunction with *Baiae* and *Misenum*, in the same vicinity, as a great watering-place, to which the luxurious Romans resorted, to find health and pleasure in its mineral waters and hot baths. Puteoli was so called from *putei*, wells. The voyage from Syracuse to this port took them through the straits between Italy and Sicily, on the Italian side of which were the noted rocks called *Scylla*, and on the Sicilian, the whirlpool called *Charybdis*.

14. *Found brethren*. The gospel had been preached in Italy, probably by some of the disciples from Jerusalem, scattered abroad in times of persecution. — *We went toward Rome*. By land, as they had disembarked at Puteoli, the usual place of landing. The imperial city was, at this period, in all its glory, and contained a population of several millions of inhabitants. Its power was irresistible throughout the then known world. It was, indeed, a world in itself.

And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to 15  
meet us as far as Appii-Forum, and The Three Taverns ; whom  
when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.

filled with people from every corner of the earth ; its stupendous amphitheatres resounding with the hum of tens of thousands of spectators ; its glorious temples filled with altars that smoked with perpetual incense ; and its forums and cabinets deciding questions which affected the weal or woe of the most distant province : or rather, at this period, the palace of a single man, the capricious, sanguinary Nero, sent out mandates that were felt, for good or ill, in Asia, Africa, Europe, and the isles of the sea. But, although Rome was in all her outward pomp and glory, and dazzled the admiration of mankind with her palaces, temples, columns, theatres, aqueducts, arches, baths, — with the prowess of her armies, the vastness of her dominions, and the splendor of her arts, literature, and oratory, — yet a worm was gnawing at the root ; her decline had begun, and her days were numbered. Luxury, corruption, tyranny of the grossest kind, were fast doing their work. At the period when a new moral world was just starting into being, in the religion of Jesus of Nazareth, and its most powerful champion arrived in this city a chained prisoner, the mighty Rome, overgrown and rotten, — the great pagan power, the Babylon of untold abominations, — was sinking into ruin. In the Roman emperor and the Christian apostle, Nero and Paul, now confronted with each other in the same city, we may view an embodiment of the two great systems which they respectively represented, and read their characters, and predict their destinies, from a comparison of the two individuals — the one sensual, cruel,

and benighted, a raging beast of prey, with no law but his own caprice, and no aim but present indulgence ; the other clear-minded and spiritually-toned, with a sublime foresight, a faith reaching into the ages, reaching into eternity, a heart beating with the noblest emotions to God and man, a life consecrated to the Lord Jesus, a nature trembling and thrilling with grand conceptions, and clasping to itself the whole world of men as brethren, Jew and Gentile, bond and free, Roman and barbarian. Such an empire must die ; such a religion must live.

15. *Appii-Forum.* Or, the forum or market-place of Appius. This was a town between fifty and sixty miles from the capital, on the south, and lying upon the far-famed Appian way, or road, near the border of the Pontine marshes. The place is now called *Cesarilla di St. Maria*. — *The Three Taverns.* This was probably the name of a town about twenty miles nearer Rome, so called from its being a place of refreshment and entertainment. The original words, “*Tres Tabernæ*,” should have been retained, as the proper name of the town. — *He thanked God, &c.* The sight of the brethren, and the respect and affection they paid him, though loaded with charges and with chains, by coming so far to offer their greetings and aid, — the recollection of his past trials, of the late shipwreck, and his deliverance from many dangers, — all brought freshly to mind his obligations of gratitude to God, and awoke a new courage and faith. Paul, though an apostle, was a man, and affected like other men. He had written his Epistle to the Roman Christians some years

16 And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to 17 dwell by himself, with a soldier that kept him. — And it came to pass, that after three days, Paul called the chief of the Jews together. And when they were come together, he said unto them, *Men and brethren*, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered 18 prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans: who when they had examined me, would have let *me* go, because 19 there was no cause of death in me. But when the Jews spake against *it*, I was constrained to appeal unto Cesar; not that I 20 had aught to accuse my nation of. For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see *you*, and to speak with *you*: be-

before, and it refreshed his spirit to see them face to face. Rom. i. 9—15. See the affectionate mention of many he knew contained in Rom. xvi.

16. *To the captain of the guard.* The prefect of the pretorian guard, whose name, as we learn from Tacitus, was Burrhus Afranius. It was the prescribed duty of this officer to take charge of persons accused and bound for trial.—*By himself*, i. e. apart from the common prisoners. Luther and others read, “where he pleased.”—*With a soldier, &c.* Paul was allowed all the freedom compatible with his being a prisoner, but was confined to a soldier by a chain passing from the right arm of one to the left arm of the other. Ver. 20.

17. *Called the chief of the Jews, &c.* He wished to gain the attention of the Jews, not merely to a vindication of himself, as a private individual, against the accusations of his enemies, but also to bring to their serious consideration the whole subject of the Christian faith.—*Men and brethren.* Brethren.—*Nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, &c.* Such were the charges lodged against his character. Chap. xxi. 28, xxiv. 5, 6.

18. *Would have let me go.* See chap. xxiv. 26, 27, xxv. 25, xxvi. 31, 32.—*No cause of death.* He was found to have committed no crime punishable with death.

19, 20. *The Jews spake against it.* They interposed, to prevent his being set at liberty. Chap. xxiv. 27. And, in order to escape their machinations, he was forced to appeal to the bar of the emperor.—*Not that I had aught to accuse my nation of.* He did not mean that he had not, in reality, great cause of complaint against his countrymen, but that it was not the object of his appeal to bring any accusation against them before the emperor, for that what he aimed at was to vindicate his innocence, and obtain safety, and liberty to preach the gospel. He forgave them their injurious conduct, and only sought his own liberation.—*For the hope of Israel*, i. e. for the grand hope of their nation, the hope of a Messiah, which he maintained had been fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, but which they denied. Chap. xxvi. 6, 7. Some interpreters also include, under this general term, the hope of the resurrection and of a future life, as stated in another place by Paul himself. Chap. xxiii. 6.—

cause that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain. And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of 21 Judea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came showed or spake any harm of thee. But we desire to hear of 22 'hee, what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against. — And when they had 23 appointed him a day, there came many to him into *his* lodging: to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and *out of* the prophets, from morning till evening. And some 24 believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not. And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, 25 after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, saying, Go unto 26 this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive. For the 27 heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

*Bound with this chain.* The one with which he was connected to the soldier that kept him. Ver. 16.

21, 22. *We neither received letters, &c.* The intercourse between Rome and Judea was, at different periods, interrupted by the disorders of the times; and, furthermore, the Jews, no doubt, dropped the prosecution, and declined pressing it any further, or appearing at the imperial court. — *That every where it is spoken against.* The intelligence of such a party or sect (see on heresy, note, chap. xxiv. 14) had reached them, but it came loaded with universal reproach. Justin Martyr says that the Jews at Jerusalem sent messengers to prejudice their brethren, in every part of the world, against the disciples of Christ. The auditors of Paul knew little, apparently, of the Christian church in their very midst, perhaps on account of its being, as is

likely, for the most part, composed of Gentiles.

23. *His lodging.* He was not permitted to leave his house. Ver. 16. — *Concerning Jesus.* Having gained their attention at the previous interview, he collected them together again, to proclaim the doctrine of the Messiah, and to argue with them, from their own lawgiver and prophets, that he had actually come, and fulfilled the long-deferred hope. His zeal was such that he spent a whole day in reasoning with them, to convince them of the truth.

24, 25. The result of his preaching was the same as every where else: some fell into the ranks of unbelief, and others yielded to the highest convictions of duty. — *Esaias.* Is. vi. 9, 10. This passage was also quoted by our Lord, and applied to the prejudiced and hardened Jews. See Mat. xiii. 14, 15; John xii. 39,

28 Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and *that* they will hear it. And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves.

30 And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom

40. Indignant at their blindness and obstinacy, the apostle took up the burning strain of the ancient prophet, as applicable to their condition.

28. *The salvation of God*, i. e. through the instrumentality of the gospel.—*Sent unto the Gentiles, &c.* If rejected by the Jews, it would be welcomed by the Gentiles, as it had been already. He would thus appeal to their shame; that the glorious hope and desire of their nation should be received by the despised sinners and outcasts of the earth, as they regarded them, sooner than by the chosen people themselves.

29. This verse is excluded, as spurious, by Griesbach and other critics, not being found in the best ancient authorities.

30, 31. *Two whole years in his own hired house.* This expression implies that, at the expiration of this period, he was set at liberty, according to the opinion of antiquity. It would appear, from the text, that he remained two years in the custody of the soldier, because his case was not decided by the emperor. Still he was not restrained from the exercise of his apostolic functions, but employed the time in publicly preaching, and privately teaching, with all the confidence and zeal with which his labors were always characterized. Phil. i. 7, 12, 13. He probably wrote, during this time, several of his epistles, as they contain references to his being a prisoner. See the Epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, and the 2d to Timothy. It was also dur-

ing the same period that Luke, according to the belief of antiquity, wrote the book of the Acts of the Apostles, at Rome, whither he had come as a companion with the apostle.

The book which we have now concluded harmonizes, in its spirit and object, with the Gospels. The character of our blessed Lord, and the purpose of his religion, are exhibited in the same holy and beautiful light as in Matthew, Mark, and John; while, moreover, new evidences arise of the divine origin and authority of the Christian faith, in the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the conversion of Paul, the miracles and teachings of the inspired apostles and disciples, and the heroism with which they braved sufferings, chains, and martyrdom, for the sake of their crucified Master. This book is, therefore, invaluable, as being the earliest record of his church after our Saviour had ascended, and showing how it proceeded from stage to stage; with what trials and dangers it was beset; with what divine power and human fidelity upheld; and to what noble ends, and immortal triumphs, it advanced, of man's salvation, and God's glory.

The curtain here drops upon an unfinished history. We know but little more of the life of Paul, except what we glean from the uncertain lore of tradition; as, that he was released, returned to visit the churches in Greece, and was finally beheaded at Rome, in the last year of the reign

of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

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of Nero, when Peter also was crucified. But the incompleteness of the narrative, and the general fragmentary character of the *Acts*, consisting as they do of a species of memoranda, journals, travels, sketches, in no degree obstruct their aim and benefit; for the impression is evidently, and perhaps intentionally, conveyed, that these facts and details are of comparatively little value, except as they mirror forth the form and soul of heavenly principles and god-like affections, the love of God and man, the faith and truth as they are in Jesus, the worth of the soul for which so much is done and suffered, the peril and ruin of sin, the mercy of God to the penitent sinner, the glory of immortality, the solemnity of retribution. The scenes, the fig-

ures, the events, which have engaged our attention, were transient, imperfect, and mortal; the language in which they are embodied is an incomplete medium of communication, and we have, perhaps, often failed of ascertaining its precise sense; but, behind all, we see the shining of the same great light, and all hearts — Peter's, Stephen's, and Paul's — responding to its truth and love. Jesus is the light of the *Acts* of the Apostles, as of the *Gospels*, though he here shines with a reflected, not a direct, ray. May he shine in and around us, and in his light may we see light! Ignorant, sinful, and dying creatures, we must be beside ourselves not to feel the need of that divine guidance, and that immortal hope and salvation!

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